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FABIOLA: ✓

OR

THE CHURCH OF THE CATACOMBS.

PART FIRST—PEACE.

CHAPTER I.

THE CHRISTIAN HOUSE.

IT is on an afternoon in September of the year 302, that we invite our reader to accompany us through the streets of Rome. The sun has declined, and is about two hours from his setting; the day is cloudless, and its heat has cooled, so that multitudes are issuing from their houses, and making their way towards Cæsar's gardens on one side, or Sallust's on the other, to enjoy their evening walk, and learn the news of the day.

But the part of the city to which we wish to conduct our friendly reader is that known by the name of the Campus Martius. It comprised the flat alluvial plain between the seven hills of older Rome and the Tiber. Before the close of the republican period, this field, once left bare for the athletic and warlike exercises of the people, had begun to be encroached upon by public buildings. Pompey had erected in it his theatre; soon after, Agrippa raised the Pantheon and its adjoining baths. But gradually it became occupied by private dwellings; while the hills, in the early empire the aristocratic portion of the city, were seized upon for greater edifices. Thus the Palatine, after Nero's fire, became almost too small for the imperial residence and its adjoining Circus Maximus. The Esquiline was usurped by Titus's baths, built on the ruins of the Golden House, the Aventine by Caracalla's; and at the period of which we write, the Emperor Dioclesian was covering the space sufficient for many lordly dwellings, by the erection of his *Thermæ** on the Quirinal, not far from Sallust's garden just alluded to.

The particular spot in the Campus Martius to which we will direct our steps, is one whose situation is so definite, that we can accurately describe it to any one acquainted with the topography of ancient or modern Rome. In republican times there was a large square space in the Campus Martius, surrounded by boarding, and divided into pens, in which the *Comitia*, or meeting of the tribes of the people, were held, for giving their votes. This was called the *Septa*, or *Ovile*, from its resemblance to a sheepfold. Augustus carried out a plan, described by Cicero in a letter to Atticus,† of transforming this homely contrivance into a magnificent and solid structure. The *Septa Julia*, as it was thenceforth called, was a splendid portico of 1000 by 500 feet, supported by columns and adorned with paintings. Its ruins are clearly traceable; and it occupied the space now covered by the Doria and Verospi palaces (running thus along the present Corso), the Roman College, the Church of St. Ignatius, and the Oratory of the Caravita.

The house to which we invite our reader is exactly opposite, and on the east side of this edifice, including in its area, the present church of St. Marcellus, whence it extended back towards the foot of the Quirinal hill. It is thus found to cover, as noble Roman houses did, a considerable extent of ground. From the outside it presents but a blank and dead appearance. The walls are plain, without architectural ornament, not high, and scarcely broken by windows. In the middle of one side of this quadrangle is a door, *in antis*, that is, merely relieved by a tympanum or triangular cornice, resting on two half columns. Using our privilege as "artists of fiction," of invisible ubiquity,

we will enter in with our friend, or "shadow," as he would have been anciently called. Passing through the porch, on the pavement of which we read, with pleasure, in Mosaic, the greeting *SALVE*, or *WELCOME*, we find ourselves in the *atrium*, or first court of the house, surrounded by a portico or colonnade.*

In the centre of the marble pavement a softly warbling jet of pure water, brought by the Claudian aqueduct from the Tusculan hills, springs into the air, now higher, now lower, and falls into an elevated basin of red marble, over the sides of which it flows in downy waves; and before reaching its lower and wider recipient, scatters a gentle shower on the rare and brilliant flowers placed in elegant vases around. Under the portico we see furniture disposed, of a rich and sometimes rare character; couches inlaid with ivory, and even silver; tables of oriental woods, bearing candelabra, lamps, and other household implements of bronze or silver; delicately chased busts, vases, tripods, and objects of mere art. On the walls are paintings evidently of a former period, still, however, retaining all their brightness of color and freshness of execution. These are separated by niches with statues, representing, indeed, like the pictures, mythological and historical subjects; but we cannot help observing, that nothing meets the eye which could offend the most delicate mind. Here and there an empty niche, or a covered painting, proves that this is not the result of accident.

As outside the columns, the coving roof leaves a large square opening in the centre, called the *impluvium*, there is drawn across it a curtain, or veil of dark canvas, which keeps out the sun and rain. An artificial twilight therefore alone enables us to see all that we have described; but it gives greater effect to what is beyond. Through an arch, opposite to the one whereby we have entered, we catch a glimpse of an inner and still richer court, paved with variegated marbles, and adorned with bright gilding. The veil of the opening above, which, however, here is closed with thick glass or talc (*lapis specularis*), has been partly withdrawn, and admits a bright but softened ray from the evening sun on to the place, where we see, for the first time, that we are in no enchanted hall, but in an inhabited house.

Beside a table, just outside the columns of Phrygian marble, sits a matron not beyond the middle of life, whose features, noble yet mild, show traces of having passed through sorrow at some earlier period. But a powerful influence has subdued the recollection of it, or blended it with a sweeter thought; and the two always come together, and have long dwelt united in her heart. The simplicity of her appearance strangely contrasts with the richness of all around her; her hair, streaked with silver, is left uncovered, and unconcealed by any artifice; her robes are of the plainest color and texture, without embroidery, except the purple ribbon sewed on, and called the *segmentum*, which denotes the state of widowhood; and not a jewel or precious ornament, of which the Roman ladies were so lavish, is to be seen upon her person. The only thing approaching to this is a slight gold cord or chain round her neck, from which apparently hangs some object, carefully concealed within the upper hem of her dress.

At the time that we discover her she is busily engaged

* The Pompeian Court in the Crystal Palace will have familiarized many readers with the forms of an ancient house.

* Hot-baths.

† *Lib. iv. ep. 16.*

over a piece of work, which evidently has no personal use. Upon a long rich strip of gold cloth, she is embroidering with still richer gold thread; and occasionally she has recourse to one or another of several elegant caskets upon the table, from which she takes out a pearl, or a gem set in gold, and introduces it into the design. It looks as if the precious ornaments of earlier days were being devoted to some higher purpose.

But as time goes on, some little uneasiness may be observed to come over her calm thoughts, hitherto absorbed, to all appearance, in her work. She now occasionally raises her eyes from it towards the entrance; sometimes she listens for footsteps, and seems disappointed. She looks up towards the sun; then perhaps turns her glance towards a *clepsydra* or water-clock, on a bracket near her; but just as a feeling of more serious anxiety begins to make an impression on her countenance, a cheerful rap strikes the house-door, and she bends forward with a radiant look to meet the welcome visitor.

CHAPTER II.

THE MARTYR'S BOY.

It is a youth full of grace, and sprightliness, and candor, that comes forward with light and buoyant steps across the atrium, towards the inner hall; and we shall hardly find time to sketch him before he reaches it. He is about fourteen years old, but tall for that age, with elegance of form and manliness of bearing. His bare neck and limbs are well developed by healthy exercise; his features display an open and warm heart, while his lofty forehead, round which his brown hair naturally curls, beams with a bright intelligence. He wears the usual youth's garment, the short *prætexta*, reaching below the knee, and a golden *bullæ*, or hollow spheroid of gold suspended round his neck. A bundle of papers and vellum rolls fastened together, and carried by an old servant behind him, shows us that he is just returning home from school.*

While we have been thus noting him, he has received his mother's embrace, and has set himself low by her feet. She gazes upon him for some time in silence, as if to discover in his countenance the cause of his unusual delay, for he is an hour late in his return. But he meets her glance with so frank a look, and with such a smile of innocence, that every cloud of doubt is in a moment dispelled; and she addresses him as follows:

"What has detained you to-day, my dearest boy? No accident, I trust, has happened to you on the way?"

"Oh, none, I assure you, sweetest mother; on the contrary, all has been delightful,—so much so, that I can scarcely venture to tell you."

A look of smiling expostulation drew from the open-hearted boy a delicious laugh, as he continued,

"Well, I suppose I must. You know I am never happy, and cannot sleep, if I have failed to tell you all the bad and the good of the day about myself." (The mother smiled again, wondering what the bad was.) "I was reading the other day that the Scythians each evening cast into an urn a white or a black stone, according as the day had been happy or unhappy; if I had to do so, it would serve to mark, in white or black, the days on which I have, or have not, an opportunity of relating to you all that I have done. But to-day, for the first time, I have a doubt, a fear of conscience, whether I ought to tell you all."

Did the mother's heart flutter more than usual, as from a first anxiety, or was there a softer solicitude dimming her eye, that the youth should seize her hand and put it tenderly to his lips, while he thus replied?

"Fear nothing, mother most beloved, your son has done nothing that may give you pain. Only say, do you wish to

hear *all* that has befallen me to-day, or only the cause of my late return home?"

"Tell me all, dear Paneratus," she answered; "nothing that concerns you can be indifferent to me."

"Well, then," he began, "this last day of my frequenting school appears to me to have been singularly blessed, and yet full of strange occurrences. First, I was crowned as the successful competitor in a declamation, which our good master Cassianus set us for our work during the morning hours; and this led, as you will hear, to some singular discoveries. The subject was, 'That the real philosopher should be ever ready to die for truth.' I never heard anything so cold or insipid (I hope it is not wrong to say so,) as the compositions read by my companions. It was not their fault, poor fellows! what truth can they possess, and what inducements can they have to die for any of their vain opinions? But to a Christian, what charming suggestions such a theme naturally makes! And so I felt it. My heart glowed, and all my thoughts seemed to burn, as I wrote my essay, full of the lessons you have taught me, and of the domestic examples that are before me. The son of a martyr could not feel otherwise. But when my turn came to read my declamation, I found that my feelings had nearly fatally betrayed me. In the warmth of my recitation, the word 'Christian' escaped my lips instead of 'philosophy,' and 'faith' instead of 'truth.' At the first mistake, I saw Cassianus start; at the second, I saw a tear glisten in his eye, as bending affectionately towards me, he said, in a whisper, 'Beware, my child; there are sharp ears listening.'"

"What, then," interrupted the mother, "is Cassianus a Christian? I chose his school for you because it was in the highest repute for learning and for morality, and now indeed I thank God that I did so. But in these days of danger and apprehension we are obliged to live as strangers in our own land, scarcely knowing the faces of our brethren. Certainly, had Cassianus proclaimed his faith, his school would soon have been deserted. But go on, my dear boy. Were his apprehensions well grounded?"

"I fear so; for while the great body of my school-fellows, not noticing these slips, vehemently applauded my hearty declamation, I saw the dark eyes of Corvinus bent scowlingly upon me, as he bit his lip in manifest anger."

"And who is he, my child, that was so displeased, and wherefore?"

"He is the oldest and strongest, but, unfortunately, the dullest boy in the school. But this, you know, is not his fault. Only, I know not why, he seems ever to have had an ill-will and grudge against me, the cause of which I cannot understand."

"Did he say aught to you, or do?"

"Yes, and was the cause of my delay. For when we went forth from school into the field by the river, he addressed me insultingly in the presence of our companions, and said, 'Come Paneratus, this, I understand is the last time we meet *her*' (he laid a particular emphasis on the word); but I have a long score to demand payment of from you. You have loved to show your superiority in school over me and others older and better than yourself; I saw your supercilious looks at me as you spouted your high-flown declamation to-day aye, and I caught expressions in it which you may live to rue and that very soon; for my father, you well know, is prefect of the city" (the mother slightly started); "and something preparing which may nearly concern you. Before you leave I must have my revenge. If you are worthy of your name, as it be not an empty word,* let us fairly contend in more manly strife than that of the style and tables.† Wrestle with me, try the cestus‡ against me. I burn to humble you as you deserve, before these witnesses of your insolent triumphs."

The anxious mother bent eagerly forward as she listened

* The *paneratum* was the exercise which combined all other personal contests—wrestling, boxing, etc.

† The implements of writing in schools, the tablets being covered with wax, which the letters were traced by the sharp point, and effaced by the flat tip of the style.

* This custom suggests to St. Augustine the beautiful idea, that the Jews were "a school of Christianity—compelling for it the heathen which they themselves

and scarcely breathed. "And what," she exclaimed, "did you answer, my dear son?"

"I told him gently that he was quite mistaken; for never had I consciously done anything that could give pain to him or any of my school-fellows; nor did I ever dream of claiming superiority over them. 'And as to what you propose,' I added, 'you know, Corvinus, that I have always refused to indulge in personal combats, which, beginning in a cool trial of skill, end in an angry strife, hatred, and wish for revenge. How much less could I think of entering on them now, when you avow that you are anxious to begin them with those evil feelings which are usually their bad end?' Our schoolmates had now formed a circle around us; and I clearly saw that they were all against me, for they had hoped to enjoy some of the delights of their cruel games; I therefore cheerfully added, 'And now, my comrades, good-bye, and may all happiness attend you. I part from you, as I have lived with you, in peace.' 'Not so,' replied Corvinus, now purple in the face with fury; 'but.'"

The boy's countenance became crimsoned, his voice quivered, his body trembled, and, half choked, he sobbed out, "I cannot go on; I dare not tell the rest!"

"I entreat you, for God's sake, and for the love you bear your father's memory," said the mother, placing her hand upon her son's head, "conceal nothing from me. I shall never again have rest if you tell me not all. What further said or did Corvinus?"

The boy recovered himself by a moment's pause and a silent prayer, and then proceeded:

"'Not so!' exclaimed Corvinus, 'not so do you depart, cowardly worshipper of an ass's head!* You have concealed your abode from us, but I will find you out; till then bear this token of my determined purpose to be revenged!' So saying he dealt me a furious blow upon the face, which made me reel and stagger, while a shout of savage delight broke forth from the boys around us."

He burst into tears, which relieved him, and then went on.

"Oh, how I felt my blood boil at that moment! how my heart seemed bursting within me; and a voice appeared to whisper in my ear scornfully the name of 'coward!' It surely was an evil spirit. I felt that I was strong enough—my rising anger made me so—to seize my unjust assailant by the throat, and cast him gasping on the ground. I heard already the shout of applause that would have hailed my victory and turned the tables against him. It was the hardest struggle of my life; never were flesh and blood so strong within me. O God! may they never be again so tremendously powerful!"

"And what did you do, then, my darling boy?" gasped forth the trembling matron.

He replied, "My good angel conquered the demon at my side. I thought of my blessed Lord in the house of Caiaphas, surrounded by scoffing enemies, and struck ignominiously on the cheek, yet meek and forgiving. Could I wish to be otherwise?† I stretched forth my hand to Corvinus, and said, 'May God forgive you, as I freely and fully do; and may he bless you abundantly.' Cassianus came up at that moment, having seen all from a distance, and the youthful crowd quickly dispersed. I entreated him, by our common faith, now acknowledged between us, not to pursue Corvinus for what he had done; and I obtained his promise. And now, sweet mother," murmured the boy, in soft, gentle accents, into his parent's bosom, "do you not think I may call this a happy day?"

lighted the lamps placed on marble and bronze candelabra, and quietly retired. A bright light beamed upon the unconscious group of mother and son, as they remained silent after the holy matron Lucina had answered Pancratius's last question only by kissing his glowing brow. It was not merely a maternal emotion that was agitating her bosom; it was not even the happy feeling of a mother who, having trained her child to certain high and difficult principles, sees them put to their hardest test, and nobly stand it. Neither was it the joy of having for her son one, in her estimation, so heroically virtuous at such an age; for surely, with much greater justice than the mother of the Gracchi showed her boys to the astonished matrons of republican Rome as her only jewels, could that Christian mother have boasted to the Church of the son she had brought up.

But to her this was an hour of still deeper, or shall we say, sublimer feeling. It was a period looked forward to anxiously for years; a moment prayed for with all the fervor of a mother's supplication. Many a pious parent has devoted her infant son from the cradle to the holiest and noblest state that earth possesses; has prayed and longed to see him grow up to be, first a spotless Levite, and then a holy priest at the altar; and has watched eagerly each growing inclination, and tried gently to bend the tender thought towards the sanctuary of the Lord of Hosts. And if this was an only child, as Samuel was to Anna, that dedication of all that is dear to her keenest affection, may justly be considered as an act of maternal heroism. What then must be said of ancient matrons—Felicitas, Symphorosa, or the unnamed mother of the Maccabees—who gave up or offered their children, not one, but many, yea all, to be victims whole-burnt, rather than priests, to God?

It was some such thought as this which filled the heart of Lucina in that hour; while with closed eyes; she raised it high to heaven, and prayed for strength. She felt as though called to make a generous sacrifice of what was dearest to her on earth; and though she had long foreseen it and desired it, it was not without a maternal throe that its merit could be gained. And what was passing in that boy's mind, as he too remained silent and abstracted? Not any thought of a high destiny awaiting him. No vision of a venerable Basilica, eagerly visited 1600 years later by the sacred antiquary and the devout pilgrim, and giving his name, which it shall bear, to the neighboring gate of Rome.* No anticipation of a church in his honor to rise in faithful ages on the banks of the distant Thames, which, even after desecration, should be loved and eagerly sought as their last resting-place, by hearts faithful still to his dear Rome.† No forethought of a silver canopy or *ciborium*, weighing 287 lbs., to be placed over the porphyry urn that should contain his ashes, by Pope Honorius I.‡ No idea that his name would be enrolled in every martyrology, his picture, crowned with rays, hung over many altars, as the boy-martyr of the early Church. He was only the simple-hearted Christian youth, who looked upon it as a matter of course that he must always obey God's law and His Gospel; and only felt happy that he had that day performed his duty, when it came under circumstances of more than usual trial. There was no pride, no self-admiration in the reflection; otherwise there would have been no heroism in his act.

When he raised again his eyes, after his calm reverie of peaceful thoughts, in the new light which brightly filled the hall, they met his mother's countenance gazing anew upon him, radiant with a majesty and tenderness such as he never recollected to have seen before. It was a look almost of inspiration; her face was as that of a vision; her eyes what he would have imagined an angel's to be. Silently, and almost unknowingly he had changed his position, and was kneeling before her; and well he might; for was she not to him as a guardian spirit, who had shielded him ever from evil; or might he not well see in her the living saint whose virtues had been his model from

CHAPTER III.

THE DEDICATION.

WHILE the foregoing conversation was held, the day had fast declined. An aged female servant now entered unnoticed, and

*Church and gate of San Pancrazio

†Old St. Pancras's, the favorite burial-place of Catholics, till they had oemo-

childhood? Lucina broke the silence, in a tone full of grave emotion.

"The time is at length come, my dear child," she said, "which has long been the subject of my earnest prayer, which I have yearned for in the exuberance of maternal love. Eagerly have I watched in thee the opening germ of each Christian virtue, and thanked God as it appeared. I have noted thy docility, thy gentleness, thy diligence, thy piety, and thy love of God and man. I have seen with joy thy lively faith, and thy indifference to worldly things, and thy tenderness to the poor. But I have been waiting with anxiety for the hour which should decisively show me, whether thou wouldst be content with the poor legacy of thy mother's weakly virtue, or art the true inheritor of thy martyred father's nobler gifts. That hour thank God, has come to-day!"

"What have I done, then, that should thus have changed or raised thy opinion of me?" asked Pancratius.

"Listen to me, my son. This day which was to be, the last of thy school education, methinks that our merciful Lord has been pleased to give thee a lesson worth it all; and to prove that thou has put off the things of a child, and must be treated henceforth as a man; for thou canst think and speak, yea, and act as one."

"How dost thou mean, dear mother."

"What thou hast told me of thy declamation this morning," she replied, "proves to me how full thy heart must have been of noble and generous thoughts; thou art too sincere and honest to have written, and fervently expressed, that it was a glorious duty to die for the faith, if thou hadst not believed it, and felt it."

"And truly I do believe and feel it," interrupted the boy.

"What greater happiness can a Christian desire on earth?"

"Yes, my child, thou sayest most truly," continued Lucina. "But I should not have been satisfied with words. What followed afterwards has proved to me that thou canst bear intrepidly and patiently, not merely pain, but what I know it must have been harder for thy young patrician blood to stand, the stinging ignominy of a disgraceful blow, and the scornful words and glances of an un pitying multitude. Nay more; thou hast proved thyself strong enough to forgive and to pray for thine enemy. This day thou hast trodden the higher paths of the mountain, with the cross upon thy shoulders; one step more, and thou wilt plant it on its summit. Thou hast proved thyself the genuine son of the martyr Quintinus. Dost thou wish to be like him?"

"Mother, mother! dearest, sweetest mother!" broke out the panting youth; "could I be his genuine son, and not wish to resemble him? Though I never enjoyed the happiness of knowing him, has not his image been ever before my mind? Has he not been the very pride of my thoughts? When each year the solemn commemoration has been made of him, as of one of the white-robed army that surrounds the Lamb, in whose blood he washed his garments, how have my heart and my flesh exulted in his glory; and how have I prayed to him, in the warmth of filial piety, that he would obtain for me, not fame, not distinction, not wealth, not earthly joy, but what he valued more than all these: nay, that the only thing which he has left on earth may be applied, as I know he now considers it would most usefully and most nobly be."

"What is that, my son?"

"It is his blood," replied the youth, "which yet remains flowing in my veins, and in these only. I know he must wish that it too, like what he held in his own, may be poured out in love of his Redeemer, and in testimony of his faith."

"Enough, enough, my child!" exclaimed the mother, thrilling with a holy emotion; "take from thy neck the badge of childhood, I have a better token to give thee."

He obeyed, and put away the golden bulla.

"Thou hast inherited from thy father," spoke the mother, with still deeper solemnity of tone, "a noble name, a high station, ample riches, every worldly advantage. But there is one treasure which I have reserved for thee from his inheritance,

till thou shouldst prove thyself worthy of it. I have concealed it from thee till now; though I valued it more than gold and jewels. It is now time that I make it over to thee."

With trembling hands she drew from her neck the golden chain which hung round it; and for the first time her son saw that it supported a small bag or purse richly embroidered, and set with gems. She opened it, and drew from it a sponge, dry indeed, but deeply stained.

"This, too, is thy father's blood, Pancratius," she said, with faltering voice and streaming eyes. "I gathered it myself from his death-wound, as disguised, I stood by his side, and saw him die from the wounds he had received for Christ."

She gazed upon it fondly, and kissed it fervently; and her gushing tears fell upon it, and moistened it once more. And thus liquefied again, its color glowed bright and warm, as if it had only just left the martyr's heart.

The holy matron put it to her son's quivering lips, and they were empurpled with its sanctifying touch. He venerated the sacred relic with the deepest emotions of a Christian and a son; and felt as if his father's spirit had descended into him, and stirred to its depths the full vessel of his heart, that its waters might be ready freely to flow. The whole family thus seemed to him once more united. Lucina replaced her treasure in the shrine, and hung it round the neck of her son, saying: "When next it is moistened, may it be from a nobler stream than that which gushes from a weak woman's eyes!" But heaven thought not so; and the future combatant was anointed, and the future martyr was consecrated, by the blood of his father mingled with his mother's tears.

CHAPTER IV.

THE HEATHEN HOUSEHOLD.

WHILE the scenes described in the three last chapters were taking place, a very different one presented itself in another house, situated in the valley between the Quirinal and the Esquiline hills. It was that of Fabius, a man of the equestrian order, whose family, by farming the revenues of Asiatic provinces, had amassed immense wealth. His house was larger and more splendid than the one we have just visited. It contained a third large peristyle, or court, surrounded by immense apartments; and besides possessing many treasures of European art, it abounded with the rarest productions of the East. Carpets from Persia were laid on the ground, silks from China, many-colored stuffs from Babylon, and gold embroidery from India and Phrygia covered the furniture; while curious works in ivory and in metals, scattered about, were attributed to the inhabitants of the islands beyond the Indian ocean, of monstrous form and fabulous descent.

Fabius himself, the owner of all this treasure and of large estates, was a true specimen of an easy-going Roman, who was determined thoroughly to enjoy this life. In fact, he never dreamt of any other. Believing in nothing, yet worshipping, as a matter of course, on all proper occasions, whatever deity happened to have its turn, he passed for a man as good as his neighbors; and no one had a right to exact more. The greater part of his day was passed at one or other of the great baths, which, besides the purposes implied in their name, comprised in their many adjuncts the equivalents of clubs, reading-rooms, gambling-houses, tennis-courts, and gymnasiums. There he took his bath, gossiped, read, and whiled away his hours; or sauntered for a time into the Forum to hear some orator speaking, or some advocate pleading, or into one of the many public gardens, whither the fashionable world of Rome repaired. He returned home to an elegant supper, not later than our dinner; where he had daily guests, either previously invited, or picked up during the day, among the many parasites on the look-out for good fare.

At home he was a kind and indulgent master. His house was well kept for him by an abundance of slaves: and as

trouble was what most he dreaded. so long as every thing was comfortable, handsome, and well-served about him, he let things go on quietly, under the direction of his freedmen.

It is not, however, so much to him that we wish to introduce our reader, as to another inmate of his house, the sharer of its splendid luxury, and the sole heiress of his wealth. This is his daughter, who, according to Roman usage, bears the father's name, softened, however, into the diminutive *Fabiola*.* As we have done before, we will conduct the reader at once into her apartment. A marble staircase leads to it from the second court, over the sides of which extends a suite of rooms, opening upon a terrace, refreshed and adorned by a graceful fountain, and covered with a profusion of the rarest exotic plants. In these chambers is concentrated whatever is most exquisite and curious, in native and foreign art. A refined taste directing ample means, and peculiar opportunities, has evidently presided over the collection and arrangement of all around. At this moment, the hour of the evening repast is approaching; and we discover the mistress of this dainty abode engaged in preparing herself, to appear with becoming splendor.

She is reclining on a couch of Athenian workmanship, inlaid with silver, in a room of Cyzicene form; that is, having glass windows to the ground, and so opening on to the flowery terrace. Against the wall opposite to her hangs a mirror of polished silver, sufficient to reflect a whole standing figure; on a porphyry-table beside it is a collection of the innumerable rare cosmetics and perfumes, of which the Roman ladies had become so fond, and on which they lavished immense sums.† On another, of Indian sandal-wood, was a rich display of jewels and trinkets in their precious caskets, from which to select for the day's use.

It is by no means our intention, nor our gift, to describe persons or features; we wish more to deal with minds. We will, therefore, content ourselves with saying, that *Fabiola*, now at the age of twenty, was not considered inferior in appearance to other ladies of her rank, age, and fortune, and had many aspirants for her hand. But she was a contrast to her father in temper and in character. Proud, haughty, imperious, and irritable, she ruled like an empress all that surrounded her, with one or two exceptions, and exacted humble homage from all that approached her. An only child, whose mother had died in giving her birth, she had been nursed and brought up in indulgence by her careless, good-natured father; she had been provided with the best masters, had been adorned with every accomplishment, and allowed to gratify every extravagant wish. She had never known what it was to deny herself a desire.

Having been left so much to herself, she had read much, and especially in profounder books. She had thus become a complete philosopher of the refined, that is, the infidel and intellectual, epicureanism, which had been long fashionable in Rome. Of Christianity she knew nothing, except that she understood it to be something very low, material, and vulgar. She despised it, in fact, too much to think of inquiring into it. And as to paganism, with its gods, its vices, its fables, and its idolatry, she merely scorned it, though outwardly she followed it. In fact, she believed in nothing beyond the present life, and thought of nothing except its refined enjoyment. But her very pride threw a shield over her virtue; she loathed the wickedness of heathen society, as she despised the frivolous youths who paid her jealously exacted attention, for she found amusement in their follies. She was considered cold and selfish, but she was morally irreproachable.

If at the beginning we seem to indulge in long descriptions, we trust that our reader will believe that they are requisite, to put him in possession of the state of material and social Rome at the period of our narrative; and will make this the more intelligible. And should he be tempted to think that we describe things as over splendid and refined for an age of decline in arts and good taste, we beg to remind him, that the

year we are supposed to visit Rome is not as remote from the better periods of Roman art, for example, that of the Antonines, as our age is from that of Cellini, Raffaele, or Donatello. Yet in how many Italian palaces are still preserved works by these great artists, fully prized, though no longer imitated? So, no doubt, it was with the houses belonging to the old and wealthy families of Rome.

We find, then, *Fabiola* reclining on her couch, holding in her left hand a silver mirror with a handle, and in the other a strange instrument for so fair a hand. It is a sharp-pointed stiletto, with a delicately carved ivory handle, and a gold ring, to hold it by. This was the favorite weapon with which Roman ladies punished their slaves, or vented their passion on them, upon suffering the least annoyance, or when irritated by pettish anger. Three female slaves are now engaged about their mistress. They belong to different races, and have been purchased at high prices, not merely on account of their appearance, but for some rare accomplishment they are supposed to possess. One is a black; not of the degraded negro stock, but from one of those races, such as the Abyssinians and Numidians, in whom the features are as regular as in the Asiatic people. She is supposed to have great skill in herbs, and their cosmetic and healing properties, perhaps also in more dangerous uses—in compounding philtres, charms, and possibly poisons. She is merely known by her national designation as *Afra*. A Greek comes next, selected for her taste in dress, and for the elegance and purity of her accent; she is therefore called *Graia*. The name which the third bears, *Syra*, tells us that she comes from Asia: and she is distinguished for her exquisite embroidery, and for her assiduous diligence. She is quiet, silent, but completely engaged with the duties which now devolve upon her. The other two are garrulous, light, and make great pretence about any little thing they do. Every moment they address the most extravagant flattery to their young mistress, or try to promote the suit of one or other of the profligate candidates for her hand, who has best or last bribed them.

"How delighted I should be, most noble mistress," said the black slave, "if I could only be in the triclinium* this evening as you enter in, to observe the brilliant effect of this new stibium† on your guests! It has cost me many trials before I could obtain it so perfect: I am sure nothing like it has been ever seen in Rome."

"As for me," interrupted the wily Greek, "I should not presume to aspire to so high an honor. I should be satisfied to look from outside the door, and see the magnificent effect of this wonderful silk tunic, which came with the last remittance of gold from Asia. Nothing can equal its beauty; nor, I may add, is its arrangement, the result of my study, unworthy of the materials."

"And you, *Syra*," interposed the mistress, with a contemptuous smile, "what would you desire? and what have you to praise of your own doing?"

"Nothing to desire, noble lady, but that you may be ever happy; nothing to praise of my own doing, for I am not conscious of having done more than my duty," was the modest and sincere reply.

It did not please the haughty lady, who said, "Methinks, slave, that you are not over given to praise. One seldom hears a soft word from your mouth."

"And what worth would it be from me," answered *Syra*; "from a poor servant to a noble dame, accustomed to hear it all day long from elegant and polished lips? Do you believe it when you hear it from *them*? Do you not despise it when you receive it from *us*?"

A look of spite was darted at her from her two companions. *Fabiola* too was angry at what she thought a reproof. A lofty sentiment in a slave!

"Have you yet to learn then," she answered haughtily, "that you are mine, and have been bought by me at a high price, that you might serve me as I please? I have as good a right to the service of your tongue as of your arms; and if it please me to be praised, and flattered, and sung to, by you, do

* Pronounced with the accent on the *i*.

† The milk of 500 asses per day was required to furnish Poppæa, Nero's wife, with one cosmetic.

* The dining-hall.

† Black antimony applied on the eyelids.

it you shall, whether *you* like it or not. A new idea, indeed, that a slave has to have any will but that of her mistress, when her very life belongs to her!"

"True," replied the handmaid, calmly, but with dignity, "my life belongs to you, and so does all else that ends with life,—time, health, vigor, body, and breath. All this you have bought with your gold, and it has become your property. But I still hold as my own what no emperor's wealth can purchase, no chains of slavery fetter, no limit of life contain."

"And pray what is that?"

"A soul!"

"A soul!" re-echoed the astonished Fabiola, who had never before heard a slave claim ownership of such a property. "And pray, let me ask you, what you mean by the word?"

"I cannot speak philosophical sentences," answered the servant, "but I mean that inward living consciousness within me, which makes me feel to have an existence with, and among, better things than surround me, which shrinks sensitively from destruction, and instinctively from what is allied to it, as disease is to death. And therefore it abhors all flattery, and it detests a lie. While I possess that unseen gift, and die it cannot, either is impossible to me."

The other two could understand but little of all this; so they stood in stupid amazement at the presumption of their companion. Fabiola too was startled; but her pride soon rose again, and she spoke with visible impatience.

"Where did you learn all this folly? Who has taught you to prate in this manner? For my part I have studied for many years, and have come to the conclusion, that all ideas of spiritual existences are the dreams of poets, or sophists; and as such I despise them. Do you, an ignorant, uneducated slave pretend to know better than your mistress? Or do you really fancy that when, after death, your corpse will be thrown on the heap of slaves who have drunk themselves, or have been scourged to death, to be burnt in one ignominious pile, and when the mingled ashes have been buried in a common pit, *you* will survive as a conscious being, and have still a life of joy and freedom to be lived?"

"*'Non omnis moriar,'** as one of your poets says," replied modestly, but with a fervent look that astonished her mistress, the foreign slave; "yes, I hope, nay, I *intend* to survive all this. And more yet; I believe and know that out of that charnel-pit which you have so vividly described, there is a hand that will pick out each charred fragment of my frame. And there is a power that will call to reckoning the four winds of heaven, and make each give back every grain of my dust that it has scattered; and I shall be built up once more in this my body, not as yours, or any one's bondswoman, but free, and joyful, and glorious, loving forever and beloved. This certain hope is laid up in my bosom."†

"What wild visions of an eastern fancy are these, unfitting you for every duty? You must be cured of them. In what school did you learn all this nonsense? I never read of it in any Greek or Latin author."

"In one belonging to my own land, a school in which there is no distinction known or admitted between Greek or barbarian, freeman or slave."

"What!" exclaimed, with strong excitement, the haughty lady, "without waiting even for that future ideal existence after death; already, even now, you presume to claim equality with me? Nay, who knows, perhaps superiority over me. Come, tell me at once, and without daring to equivocate or disguise, if you do so or not?" And she sat up in an attitude of eager expectation. At every word of the calm reply her agitation increased, and violent passions seemed to contend within her, as Syra said:

"Most noble mistress, far superior are you to me in place, and power, and learning, and genius, and in all that enriches and embellishes life; and in every grace of form and lineament, and in every charm of act and speech, high are you raised above all rivalry, and far removed from envious thoughts, from

one so lowly and so insignificant as I. But if I must answer simple truth to your authoritative question?"—she paused, as faltering; but an imperious gesture from her mistress bade her continue—"then I put it to your own judgment, whether a poor slave, who holds an unquenchable consciousness of possessing within her a spiritual and living intelligence, whose measure of existence is immortality, whose only true place of dwelling is above the skies, whose only rightful prototype is the Deity, can hold herself inferior in moral dignity, or lower in greatness of thought than one who, however gifted, owns that she claims no higher destiny, recognizes in herself no sublimer end than what awaits the pretty irrational songsters that beat without hope of liberty against the gilded bars of that cage."*

Fabiola's eyes flashed with fury; she felt herself for the first time in her life, rebuked, humbled by a slave. She grasped the style in her right hand, and made an almost blind thrust at the unflinching handmaid. Syra instinctively put forward her arm to save her person, and received the point, which, aimed upwards from the couch, inflicted a deeper gash than she had ever before suffered. The tears started into her eyes through the smart of the wound, from which the blood gushed in a stream. Fabiola was in a moment ashamed of her cruel, though unintentional act, and felt still more humbled before her servants.

"Go, go," she said to Syra, who was stanching the blood with her handkerchief, "go to Euphrosyne, and have the wound dressed. I did not mean to hurt you so grievously. But stay a moment, I must make you some compensation." Then, after turning over her trinkets on the table, she continued, "Take this ring; and you need not return here again this evening."

Fabiola's conscience was quite satisfied; she had made what she considered ample atonement for the injury she had inflicted, on the shape of a costly present to a menial dependant. And on the following Sunday, in the titlet of St. Pastor, not far from her house, among the alms collected for the poor was found a valuable emerald ring, which the good priest Polycarp thought must have been the offering of some very rich Roman lady; but which He who watched, with beaming eye, the alms-coffs of Jerusalem, and noted the widow's mite, alone saw dropped into the chest, by the bandaged arm of a foreign female slave.

CHAPTER V.

THE VISIT.

DURING the latter part of the dialogue just recorded, and the catastrophe which closed it, there took place an apparition in Fabiola's room, which, if seen by her, would probably have cut short the one, and prevented the other. The interior chambers in a Rome house were more frequently divided by curtains across their entrances, than by doors; and thus it was easy, especially during such an excited scene as had just taken place, to enter unobserved. This was the case now; and when Syra turned to leave the room, she was almost startled at seeing standing, in bright relief before the deep crimson door-curtain, a figure, which she immediately recognized, but which we must briefly describe.

It was that of a lady, or rather a child not more than twelve or thirteen years old, dressed in pure and spotless white, without a single ornament about her person. In her countenance might be seen united the simplicity of childhood with the intelligence of a maturer age. There not merely dwelt in her eyes that dove-like innocence which the sacred poet describes,† but often there beamed from them rather an intensity of pure affection, as though they were looking beyond all surrounding objects, and rested upon one, unseen by all else, but to her

* See the noble answer of Evalpistus, an imperial slave, to the judge 'n the Acts of St. Justin, ap. Ruffart, tom. i. † Church.

‡ "Thy eyes are those of doves."—*Cantic*, l. 14.

* Not all of me will die. † Job xix. 27.

really present, and exquisitely dear. Her forehead was the very seat of candor, open and bright with undisguising truthfulness; a kindly smile played about the lips, and the fresh, youthful features, varied their sensitive expression with guileless earnestness, passing rapidly from one feeling to the other, as her warm and tender heart received it. Those who knew her believed that she never thought of herself, but was divided entirely between kindness to those about her, and affection for her unseen love.

When Syra saw this beautiful vision, like that of an angel, before her, she paused for a moment. But the child took her hand, and reverently kissed it, saying; "I have seen all; meet me in the small chamber near the entrance, when I go out."

She then advanced; and as Fabiola saw her, a crimson blush mantled in her cheek; for she feared the child had been witness of her undignified burst of passion. With a cold wave of her hand she dismissed her slaves, and then greeted her kinswoman, for such she was, with cordial affection. We have said that Fabiola's temper made a few exceptions in its haughty exercise. One of these was her old nurse and freedwoman Euphrosyne, who directed all her private household; and whose only creed was, that Fabiola was the most perfect of beings, the wisest, most accomplished, most admirable lady in Rome. Another was her young visitor, whom she loved, and ever treated with gentlest affection, and whose society she always coveted.

"This is really kind of you, dear Agnes," said the softened Fabiola, "to come at my sudden request, to join our table to-day. But the fact is, my father has called in one or two new people to dine, and I was anxious to have some one with whom I could have the excuse of a duty to converse. Yet I own I have some curiosity about one of our new guests. It is Fulvius, of whose grace, wealth, and accomplishments I hear so much; though nobody seems to know who or what he is, or whence he has sprung up."

"My dear Fabiola," replied Agnes, "you know I am always happy to visit you, and my kind parents willingly allow me; therefore, make no apologies about that."

"And so you have come to me as usual," said the other playfully, "in your own snow-white dress, without jewel or ornament, as if you were every day a bride. You always seem to me to be celebrating one eternal espousal. But, good heavens! what is this? Are you hurt? Or are you aware that there is, right on the bosom of your tunic, a large red spot—it looks like blood. If so let me change your dress at once."

"Not for the world, Fabiola; it is the jewel, the only ornament I mean to wear this evening. It is blood, and that of a slave; but nobler in my eyes, and more generous than flows in your veins or mine."

The whole truth flashed upon Fabiola's mind. Agnes had seen all; and humbled almost to sickening, she said somewhat pettishly, "Do you then wish to exhibit proof to all the world of my hastiness of temper, in over-chastising a forward slave?"

"No, dear cousin, far from it. I only wish to preserve for myself a lesson of fortitude and of elevation of mind, learnt from a slave, such as few patrician philosophers can teach us."

"What a strange idea? Indeed, Agnes, I have often thought that you make too much of that class of people. After all, what are they?"

"Human beings as much as ourselves, endowed with the same reason, the same feeling, and the same organization. Thus far you will admit, at any rate, to go no higher. Then they form part of the same family; and if God, from whom comes our life, is thereby our Father, He is theirs as much, and consequently they are our brethren."

"A slave my brother or sister, Agnes? The gods forbid it! They are our property and our goods; and I have no notion of their being allowed to move, to act, to think, or to feel, except as it suits their masters, or is for their advantage."

"Come, come," said Agnes, with her sweetest tones, "do not let us get into a warm discussion. You are too candid and honorable not to feel, and to be ready to acknowledge, that to-

day you have been outdone by a slave in all that you most admire—in mind, in reasoning, in truthfulness, and in heroic fortitude. Do not answer me; I see it in that tear. But, dearest cousin, I will save you from a repetition of your pain. Will you grant me my request?"

"Any in my power,"

"Then it is that you will allow me to purchase Syra—I think that is her name. You will not like to see her about you."

"You are mistaken, Agnes. I will master pride for once, and own, that I shall now esteem her, perhaps almost admire her. It is a new feeling in me towards one in her station."

"But I think, Fabiola, I could make her happier than she is."

"No doubt, dear Agnes; you have the power of making every body happy about you. I never saw such a household as yours. You seem to carry out in practice that strange philosophy which Syra alluded to, in which there is no distinction of freedmen and slave. Everybody in your house is always smiling, and cheerfully anxious to discharge his duty. And there seems to be no one who thinks of commanding. Come, tell me your secret." (Agnes smiled.) "I suspect, you little magician, that in that mysterious chamber, which you will never open for me, you keep your charms and potions by which you make everybody and everything love you. If you were a Christian, and were exposed in the amphitheatre, I am sure the very leopards would crouch and nestle at your feet. But why do you look so serious, child? You know I am only joking."

Agnes seemed absorbed; and bent forward that keen and tender look which we have mentioned, as though she saw before her, nay, as if she heard speaking to her, some one delicately beloved. It passed away, and she gaily said, "Well, well, Fabiola, stranger things have come to pass; and, at any rate, if aught so dreadful had to happen, Syra would just be the sort of person one would like to see near one; so you really must let me have her."

"For heaven's sake, Agnes, do not take my words so seriously. I assure you they were spoken in jest. I have too high an opinion of your good sense to believe such a calamity possible." But as to Syra's devotedness, you are right. When last summer you were away, and I was so dangerously ill of contagious fever, it required the lash to make the other slaves approach me; while that poor thing would hardly leave me, but watched by me, and nursed me day and night, and I really believe greatly promoted my recovery."

"And did you not love her for this?"

"Love her! Love a slave, child! Of course, I took care to reward her generously; though I cannot make out what she does with what I give her. The others tell me she has nothing put by, and she certainly spends nothing on herself. Nay, I have even heard that she foolishly shares her daily allowance of food with a blind beggar-girl. What a strange fancy, to be sure!"

"Dearest Fabiola," exclaimed Agnes, "she must be mine! You promised me my request. Name your price, and let me take her home this evening."

"Well, be it so, you most irresistible of petitioners. But we will not bargain together. Send some one to-morrow, to see my father's steward, and all will be right. And now, this great piece of business being settled between us, let us go down to our guests."

"But you have forgotten to put on your jewels."

"Never mind them; I will do without them for once. I feel no taste for them to-day."

CHAPTER VI.

THE BANQUET.

THEY found, on descending, all the guests assembled in a hall below. It was not a state banquet which they were going to share, but the usual meal of a rich house, where prepara-

tion for a tableful of friends was always made. We will therefore content ourselves with saying that everything was elegant and exquisite in arrangement and material; and we will confine ourselves entirely to such incidents as may throw a light upon our story.

When the two ladies entered the exedra or hall, Fabius, after saluting his daughter, exclaimed: "Why, my child, you have come down, though late, still scarcely fittingly arranged! You have forgotten your usual trinkets."

Fabiola was confused. She knew not what answer to make: she was ashamed of her weakness about her angry display; and still more of what she now thought a silly way of punishing herself for it. Agnes stepped in to the rescue, and blushing said: "It is my fault, cousin Fabius, both that she is late, and that she is so plainly dressed. I detained her with my gossip; and no doubt she wishes to keep me in countenance by the simplicity of her attire."

"You, dear Agnes," replied the father, "are privileged to do as you please. But, seriously speaking, I must say that, even with you, this may have answered while you were a mere child; now that you are marriageable*, you must begin to make a little more display, and try to win the affections of some handsome and eligible youth. A beautiful necklace, for instance, such as you have plenty of at home, would not make you less attractive. But you are not attending to me. Come, come, I dare say you have some one already in view."

During most of this address, which was meant to be thoroughly good-natured, as it was perfectly worldly, Agnes appeared in one of her abstracted moods, her bewitched looks, as Fabiola called them, transfixed, in a smiling ecstasy, as if attending to some one else, but never losing the thread of the discourse, nor saying anything out of place. She therefore at once answered Fabius: "Oh, yes, most certainly, one who has already pledged me to him by his betrothal-ring, and has adorned me with immense jewels."†

"Really!" asked Fabius, "with what?"

"Why," answered Agnes, with a look of glowing earnestness, and in tones of artless simplicity, "he has girded my hand and neck with precious gems, and has set in my ears rings of peerless pearls."‡

"Goodness!" who can it be? Come, Agnes, some day you must tell me your secret. Your first love, no doubt: may it last long and make you happy!"

"Forever!" was her reply, as she turned to join Fabiola, and enter with her into the dining-room. It was well she had not overheard this dialogue, or she would have been hurt to the quick, at thinking that Agnes had concealed the most important thought of her age, as she would have considered it, from her most loving friend. But while Agnes was defending her, she had turned away from her father, and had been attending to the other guests. One was a heavy, thick-necked Roman sophist, or dealer in universal knowledge, named Calpurnius; another, Proculus, a mere lover of good fare, often at the house. Two more remain, deserving further notice. The first of them, evidently a favorite with both Fabiola and Agnes, was a tribune, a high officer of the imperial or prætorian guard. Though not above thirty years of age, he had already distinguished himself by his valor, and enjoyed the highest favors with the emperors Dioclesian in the East, and Maximian Herculeus in Rome. He was free from all affectation in manner or dress, though handsome in person; and though most engaging in conversation, he manifestly scorned the foolish topics which generally occupied society. In short, he was a perfect specimen of a noble-hearted youth, full of honor and generous thoughts; strong and brave, without a particle of pride or display in him.

Quite a contrast to him was the last guest, already alluded to by Fabiola, the new star of society, Fulvius. Young, and

almost effeminate in look, dressed with most elaborate elegance, with brilliant rings on every finger, and jewels in his dress, affected in his speech, which had a slightly foreign accent, overstrained in his courtesy of manners, but apparently good-natured and obliging, he had in a short time quietly pushed his way into the highest society of Rome. This was, indeed, owing partly to his having been seen at the imperial court, and partly to the fascination of his manner. He had arrived in Rome accompanied by a single elderly attendant, evidently deeply attached to him; whether slave, freedman, or friend, nobody well knew. They spoke together always in a strange tongue, and the swarthy features, keen fiery eye, and unamiable expression of the domestic, inspired a certain degree of fear in his dependants; for Fulvius had taken an apartment in what was called an *insula*, or house let out in parts, had furnished it luxuriously, and had peopled it with a sufficient bachelor's establishment of slaves. Profusion rather than abundance distinguished all his domestic arrangements; and, in the corrupted and degraded circle of pagan Rome, the obscurity of his history, and the suddenness of his apparition, were soon forgotten in the evidence of his riches and the charm of his loose conversation. A shrewd observer of character, however, would soon notice a wandering restlessness of eye, and an eagerness of listening attention for all sights and sounds around him, which betrayed an insatiable curiosity; and, in moments of forgetfulness, a dark scowl, under his knit brows, from his flashing eyes, and a curling of the upper lip, which inspired a feeling of mistrust, and gave an idea that his exterior softness only clothed a character of feline malignity.

The guests were soon at table; and as ladies sat, while men reclined on couches during the repast, Fabiola and Agnes were together on one side, the two younger guests last described were opposite, and the master, with his two elder friends in the middle—if these terms can be used to describe their position about three parts of a round table; one side being left unencumbered by the *sigma**, or semi-circular couch, for the convenience of serving. And we may observe, in passing, that a table-cloth, a luxury unknown in the times of Horace, was now in ordinary use.

When the first claims of hunger or the palate had been satisfied, conversation grew more general.

"What news to-day of the baths?" asked Calpurnius; "I have no leisure myself to look after such trifles."

"Very interesting news indeed," answered Proculus. "It seems quite certain that orders have been received from the divine Dioclesian to finish his Thermæ in three years."

"Impossible!" exclaimed Fabius. "I looked in at the works the other day, on my way to Sallust's gardens, and found them very little advanced in the last year. There is an immense deal of heavy work to be done, such as carving marbles and shaping columns."

"True," interposed Fulvius: "but I know that orders have been sent to all parts, to forward hither all prisoners, and all persons condemned to the mines in Spain, Sardinia, and even Chersonesus, who can possibly be spared, to come and labor at the Thermæ. A few thousand Christians, thus set to the work, will soon finish it."

"And why Christians better than other criminals?" asked, with some curiosity, Fabiola.

"Why, really," said Fulvius, with his most winning smile, "I can hardly give a reason for it; but the fact is so. Among fifty workmen so condemned, I would engage to pick out a single Christian."

"Indeed!" exclaimed several at once; "pray how?"

"Ordinary convicts," answered he, "naturally do not love their work, and they require the lash at every step to compel them to perform it; and when the overseer's eye is off them no work is done. And moreover, they are of course rude, sottish, quarrelsome and querulous. But the Christians, when condemned to these public works, seem, on the contrary, to be glad and are always cheerful and obedient. I have seen young patricians so engaged in Asia, whose hands had never before

* Twelve was the age for marriage, according to the Roman law.

† "Annulo nidi sum subarrhavit me, et immensis monilibus ornavit me."—*Office of St. Agnes.*

‡ "Dexteram meam et collum meum cinxit lapidibus pretiosis, tradidit caribus meis inestimabiles margaritas."

* So called from its resemblance to the letter C, the old form of Σ.

handled a pickaxe, and whose weak shoulders had never borne a weight, yet working hard, and as happy, to all appearance, as when at home. Of course, for all that, the overseers apply the lash and the stick very freely to them, and most justly; because it is the will of the divine emperors that their lot should be made as hard as possible; but still they never complain."

"I cannot say that I admire this sort of justice," replied Fabiola; "but what a strange race they must be! I am most curious to know what can be the motive or cause of this stupidity, or unnatural insensibility, in these Christians?"

Proculus replied, with a facetious look: Calpurnius here no doubt can tell us; for he is a philosopher, and I hear could declaim for an hour on any topic, from the Alps to an ant-hill."

Calpurnius, thus challenged, and thinking himself highly complimented, solemnly gave mouth: "The Christians," said he, "are a foreign sect, the founder of which flourished many years ago in Chaldea. His doctrines were brought to Rome at the time of Vespasian by two brothers named Peter and Paul. Some maintain that these were the same twin brothers as the Jews call Moses and Aaron, the second of whom sold his birthright to his brother for a kid, the skin of which he wanted to make *chirotheca** of. But this identity I do not admit, as it is recorded in the mystical books of the Jews that the second of these brothers, seeing the other's victims give better omens of the birds than his own, slew him, as our Romulus did Remus, but with the jaw-bone of an ass; for which he was hung by King Mardochæus of Macedon, upon a gibbet fifty cubits high, at the suit of their sister Judith. However, Peter and Paul coming, as I said, to Rome, the former was discovered to be a fugitive slave of Pontius Pilate, and was crucified by his master's orders on the Janiculum. Their followers, of whom they had many, made the cross their symbol and adore it, and they think it the greatest honor to suffer stripes, and even ignominious death as the best means of being like their teachers and, as they fancy, of going to them in a place somewhere among the clouds."†

This lucid explanation of the origin of Christianity was listened to with admiration by all except two. The young officer gave a piteous look toward Agnes, which seemed to say, "Shall I answer the goose, or shall I laugh outright?" But she put her fingers on her lips, and smiled imploringly for silence.

"Well, then, the upshot of it is," observed Proculus, "that the Thermæ will be finished soon, and we shall have glorious sport. Is it not said, Fulvius, that the divine Dioclesian will himself come to the dedication?"

"It is quite certain; and so will there be splendid festivals and glorious games. But we shall not have to wait so long; already, for other purposes, have orders been sent to Numidia for an unlimited supply of lions and leopards to be ready before winter." Then turning round sharp to his neighbors, he said, bending a keen eye upon his countenance: "A brave soldier like you, Sebastian, must be delighted with the noble spectacles of the amphitheatre, especially when directed against the enemies of the august emperors, and of the republic."

The officer raised himself upon his couch, looked on his interrogator with an unmoved, majestic countenance, and answered calmly:

"Fulvius, I should not deserve the title which you gave me, could I contemplate with pleasure, in cold blood, the struggle, if it deserve the name, between a brute beast and a helpless child or woman, for such are the spectacles which you call noble. No, I will draw my sword willingly against any enemy of the princes or the state; but I would as readily draw it against the lion or the leopard that should rush, even by imperial order, against the innocent and defenceless." Fulvius was starting up, but Sebastian placed his strong hand upon his arm, and continued: "Hear me out. I am not the first Roman, nor the noblest, who has thought thus before me. Remember

the words of Cicero: 'Magnificent are these games, no doubt; but what delight can it be to a refined mind to see either a feeble man torn by a most powerful beast, or a noble animal pierced through by a javelin?*' I am not ashamed of agreeing with the greatest of Roman orators."

"Then shall we never see you in the amphitheatre, Sebastian?" asked Fulvius, with a bland but taunting tone.

"If you do," the soldier replied, "depend upon it, it will be on the side of the defenceless, not on that of the brutes that would destroy them."

"Sebastian is right," exclaimed Fabiola, clapping her hands, "and I close the discussion by my applause. I have never heard Sebastian speak except on the side of generous and high-minded sentiments."

Fulvius bit his lip in silence, and all rose to depart.

CHAPTER VII.

POOR AND RICH.

DURING the latter part of the conversation just recorded, Fabius had been quite abstracted, speculating upon his conversation with Agnes. How quietly she had kept her secret to herself! But who could this favored person be, who had already won her heart? He thought over many, but could find no answer. The gift of rich jewels particularly perplexed him. He knew no young Roman nobleman likely to possess them; and sauntering, as he did, every day into the great shops, he was sure to have heard if any such costly order had been given. Suddenly the bright idea flashed through his mind that Fulvius, who daily exhibited new and splendid gems, brought from abroad, could be the only person able to make her such presents. He, moreover, noticed such occasional looks darted towards his cousin by the handsome foreigner, as left him no doubt that he was deeply enamored of her; and if Agnes did not seem conscious of the admiration, this, of course, was part of the plan. Once convinced of this important conclusion, he determined to favor the wishes of the two, and astonish his daughter one day by the sagacity he had displayed.

But we must leave our nobler guests for more humble scenes, and follow Syra from the time that she left her young mistress's apartment. When she presented herself to Euphrosyne, the good-natured nurse was shocked at the cruel wound, and uttered an exclamation of pity. But immediately recognizing in it the work of Fabiola, she was divided between two contending feelings. "Poor thing!" she said, as she went on first washing, then closing and dressing, the gash; "it is a dreadful cut! What did you do to deserve it? How it must have hurt you, my poor girl! But how wicked you must have been to bring it upon yourself! It is a savage wound, yet inflicted by the gentlest of creatures! (You must be faint from loss of blood; take this cordial to support you): and no doubt she found herself obliged to strike."

"No doubt," said Syra, amused, "it was all my fault: I had no business to argue with my mistress."

"Argue with her!—argue!—O ye gods! who ever heard before of a slave arguing with a noble mistress, and such a learned one! Why, Calpurnius himself would be afraid of disputing with her. No wonder, indeed, she was so—so agitated, as not to know that she was hurting you. But this must be concealed; it must not be known that you have been so wrong. Have you no scarf or nice veil that we could throw round the arm, as if for ornament? All the others, I know, have plenty given or bought; but you never seem to care for these pretty things. Let us look."

She went into the maid-slaves' dormitory, which was within her room, opened Syra's *capsa* or box, and after turning over in vain its scanty contents, she drew forth from the bottom a square kerchief of richest stuff, magnificently embroidered, and even adorned with pearls. Syra blushed deeply, and entreated

* *Gloves.*

† *Lucian: De Morte Peregrini.*

* "Magnificæ nemo negat; sed quæ potest esse homini pœntio delectatio, quàm aut hæmo imbecillus a valentissima bestia vincatur, aut præclara cœstit venabulo transverberetur?"—*Erg. ad Fam. lib. vi. ep. 1.*

not to be obliged to wear this most disproportionate piece of dress, especially as it was a token of better days, long and painfully preserved. But Euphrosyne, anxious to hide her mistress's fault, was inexorable; and the rich scarf was gracefully fastened round the wounded arm.

This operation performed, Syra proceeded to the little parlor opposite the porter's room, where the higher slaves could see their friends. She held in her hand a basket covered with a napkin. The moment she entered the door, a light step came bounding across the room to meet her. It was that of a girl of about sixteen or seventeen, dressed in the poorest attire, but clean and neat, who threw her arms round Syra's neck with such a bright countenance and such hearty glee that a bystander would hardly have supposed that her sightless eyes had never communed with the outer world.

"Sit down, dear Cæcilia," said Syra, with a most affectionate tone, and leading her to a seat; "to-day I have brought you a famous feast: you will fare sumptuously."

"How so? I think I do every day."

"No, but to-day my mistress has kindly sent me out a dainty dish from her table, and I have brought it here for you."

"How kind of her; yet how much kinder of you, my sister! But why have you not partaken of it yourself? It was meant for you, and not for me."

"Why, to tell the truth, it is a greater treat to me to see you enjoy anything than to enjoy it myself."

"No, dear Syra, no; it must not be. God has wished me to be poor, and I must try to do His will. I could no more think of eating the food than I could of wearing the dress, of the rich, so long as I can obtain that of the poor. I love to share with you your *pulmentum**, which I know is given me in charity by one poor like myself. I procure for you the merit of alms-deeds; you give me the consolation of feeling that I am, before God, still only a poor blind thing. I think He will love me better thus, than if feeding on luxurious fare. I would rather be with Lazarus at the gate, than with Dives at the table."

"How much better and wiser you are than I, my good child! It shall be as you wish. I will give the dish to my companions, and, in the meantime, here I set before you your usual humble fare."

"Thanks, thanks, dear sister; I will await your return."

Syra went to the maids' apartment, and put before her jealous but greedy companions the silver dish. As their mistress occasionally showed them this little kindness, it did not much surprise them. But the poor servant was weak enough to be ashamed of appearing before her comrades with the rich scarf round her arm. She took it off before she entered; then, not to displease Euphrosyne, replaced it, as well as she could with one hand, on coming out. She was in the court below, returning to her blind friend, when she saw one of the noble guests of her mistress's table alone, and, with a mortified look, crossing towards the door, and she stepped behind a column to avoid any possible, and not uncommon, rudeness. It was Fulvius; and no sooner did she, unseen, catch a glimpse of him than she stood for a moment as nailed to the spot. Her heart beat against her bosom, then quivered as if about to cease its action; her knees struck against one another, a shiver ran through her frame, while perspiration started on her brow. Her eyes, wide open, were fascinated, like the bird's before the snake. She raised her hand to her breast, made upon it the sign of life, and the spell was broken. She fled in an instant, still unnoticed; and had hardly stepped noiselessly behind a curtain that closed the stairs, when Fulvius, with down-cast eyes, reached the spot on which she had stood. He started back a step, as if scared by something lying before him. He trembled violently; but recovering himself by a sudden effort, he looked around him, and saw that he was alone. There was no eye upon him—except One which he did not heed, but which read his evil heart in that hour. He gazed upon the object, and stooped to pick it up; but drew back his hand, and that more than once. At last he heard footsteps approaching, he

recognized the martial tread of Sebastian; and hastily he snatched up from the ground the rich scarf which had dropped from Syra's arm. He shook as he folded it up; and when, to his horror, he found upon it spots of fresh blood, which had oozed through the bandages, he reeled, like a drunken man, to the door, and rushed to his lodgings.

Pale, sick, and staggering, he went into his chamber, repulsing roughly the officious advances of his slaves; and only beckoned to his faithful domestic to follow him, and then signed to him to bar the door. A lamp was burning brightly by the table, on which Fulvius threw the embroidered scarf in silence, and pointed to the stains of blood. That dark man said nothing; but his swarthy countenance was blanched, while his master's was ashy and livid.

"It is the same, no doubt," at length spoke the attendant, in their foreign tongue; "but *she* is certainly dead."

"Art thou quite sure, Eurotas?" asked the master, with the keenest of his hawk's looks.

"As sure as man can be of what he has not seen himself. Where didst thou find this? And whence this blood?"

"I will tell thee all to-morrow; I am too sick to-night. As to those stains, which were liquid when I found it, I know not whence they came, unless they are warnings of vengeance—*ay*, a vengeance themselves, deep as the Furies could meditate, fierce as they can launch. That blood has not been shed now."

"Tut, tut! this is no time for dreams or fancies. Did anyone see thee pick the—the thing up?"

"No one, I am sure."

"Then we are safe; better in our hands than in others. A good night's rest will give us better counsel."

"True, Eurotas; but do thou sleep this night in my chamber."

Both threw themselves on their couches: Fulvius on a rich bed, Eurotas on a lowly pallet; from which, raised upon his elbow, with dark but earnest eye, he long watched, by the lamp's light, the troubled slumbers of the youth—at once his devoted guardian and his evil genius. Fulvius tossed about, and moaned in his sleep, for his dreams were gloomy and heavy. First he sees before him a beautiful city in a distant land, with a river of crystal flowing through it. Upon it is a galley weighing anchor, with a figure on deck waving towards him, in farewell, an embroidered scarf. The scene changes; the ship is in the midst of the sea, battling with a furious storm, while on the summit of the mast the same scarf streams out, like a pennant, unruffled and uncrumpled by the breeze. The vessel is now dashed upon a rock, and all with a dreadful shriek are buried in the deep. But the topmast stands above the billows, with its calm and brilliant flag; till, amidst the sea-birds that shriek around, a form with a torch in her hand, and black flapping wings, flies by, snatches it from the staff, and with a look of stern anger displays it, as in her flight she pauses before him. He reads upon it, written in fiery letters, NEMESIS.*

But it is time to return to our other acquaintance in the house of Fabius.

After Syra had heard the door close on Fulvius, she paused to compose herself, offered up a secret prayer, and returned to her blind friend. She had finished her frugal meal, and was waiting patiently the slave's return. Syra then commenced her daily duties of kindness and hospitality; she brought water, washed her hands and feet, in obedience to Christian practice, and combed and dressed her hair, as if the poor creature had been her own child. Indeed, though not much older, her look was so tender as she hung over her poor friend, her tones were so soft, her whole action so motherly, that one would have thought it was a parent ministering to her daughter, rather than a slave serving a beggar. And this beggar too looked so happy. spoke so cheerily, and said such beautiful things, that Syra lingered over her work to listen to her and gaze on her.

It was at this moment that Agnes came for her appointed interview, and Fabiola insisted on accompanying her to the door.

* Torridge.

* Vengeance.

But when Agnes softly raised the curtain and caught a sight of the scene before her, she beckoned to Fabiola to look in, enjoining silence by her gesture. The blind girl was opposite, and her voluntary servant on one side, unconscious of witnesses. The heart of Fabiola was touched; she had never imagined that there was such a thing as disinterested love on earth between strangers; as to charity, it was a word unknown to Greece or Rome. She retreated quietly, with a tear in her eye, and said to Agnes as she took leave :

"I must retire; that girl, as you know, proved to me this afternoon that a slave may have a head; she has now shown me that she may have a heart. I was amazed, when, a few hours ago, you asked me if I did not love a slave. I think, now, I could almost love Syra. I half regret that I have agreed to part with her."

As she went back into the court, Agnes entered the room, and laughing, said,

"So, Cæcilia, I have found out your secret at last. This is the friend whose food you have always said was so much better than mine, that you would never eat at my house. Well, if the dinner is not better, at any rate I agree that you have fallen in with a better hostess."

"Oh, don't say so, sweet Lady Agnes," answered the blind girl; "It is the dinner indeed that is better. You have plenty of opportunities for exercising charity; but a poor slave can only do so by finding some one still poorer and helpless, like me. That thought makes her food by far the sweetest."

"Well, you are right," said Agnes, "and I am not sorry to have you present, to hear the good news I bring to Syra. It will make *you* happy too. Fabiola has allowed me to become your mistress, Syra, and to take you with me. To-morrow you shall be free, and a dear sister to me."

Cæcilia clapped her hands with joy, and throwing her arms round Syra's neck, exclaimed: "Oh, how good. How happy you will now be, dear Syra!"

But Syra was deeply troubled, and replied with faltering voice, "Oh good and gentle lady, you have been kind indeed, to think so much about one like me. But pardon me if I entreat you to remain as I am; I assure you, dear Cæcilia, I am quite happy here."

"But why wish to stay?" asked Agnes.

"Because," rejoined Syra, "it is most perfect to abide with God, in the state wherein we have been called.* I own this is not the one in which I was born; I have been brought to it by others." A burst of tears interrupted her for a moment, and then she went on. "But so much the more clear is it to me, that God has willed me to serve Him in this condition. How can I wish to leave it?"

"Well, then," said Agnes, still more eagerly, "we can easily manage it. I will not free you, and you shall be my bond-woman. That will be just the same."

"No, no," said Syra, smiling, "that will never do. Our great Apostle's instructions to us are: 'Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward.† I am far from saying that my mistress is one of these; but you, noble Lady Agnes, are too good and gentle for me. Where would be my cross, if I lived with you? You do not know how proud and headstrong I am by nature; and I should fear for myself, if I had not some pain and humiliation.'"

Agnes was almost overcome; but she was more eager than ever to possess such a treasure of virtue, and said, "I see, Syra, that no motive addressed to your own interest can move you, I must therefore use a more selfish plea. I want to have you with me, that I may improve by your advice and example. Come, you will not refuse such a request."

"Selfish," replied the slave, "you can never be. And therefore I will appeal to yourself from your request. You know Fabiola, and you love her. What a noble soul, and what a splendid intellect she possesses! What great qualities and high accomplishments, if they only reflected the light of truth!

And how jealously does she guard in herself that pearl of virtues, which only we know how to prize! What a truly great Christian she would make!"

"Go on, for God's sake, dear Syra," broke out Agnes, all eageriness. "And do you hope for it?"

"It is my prayer day and night; it is my chief thought and aim; it is the occupation of my life. I will try to win her by patience, by assiduity, even by such unusual discussions as we have held to-day. And when all is exhausted, I have one resource more."

"What is that?" both asked.

"To give my life for her conversion. I know that a poor slave like me has few chances of martyrdom. Still, a fiercer persecution is said to be approaching, and perhaps it will not disdain such humble victims. But be that as God pleases, my life for her soul is placed in His hands. And oh, dearest, best of ladies," she exclaimed, falling on her knees and bedewing Agnes's hand with tears, "do not come in thus between me and my prize."

"You have conquered, sister Syra (oh I never again call me lady)," said Agnes. "Remain at your post; such single-hearted, generous virtue must triumph. It is too sublime for so homely a sphere as my household."

"And I, for my part," subjoined Cæcilia, with a look of arch gravity, "say that she has said one very wicked thing, and told a great story, this evening."

"What is that, my pet?" asked Syra, laughing.

"Why, you said that I was wiser and better than you, because I declined eating some trumpery delicacy, which would have gratified my palate for a few minutes, at the expense of an act of greediness; while you have given up liberty, happiness, the free exercise of your religion, and have offered to give up life itself, for the salvation of one who is your tyrant and tormentor. Oh, fie! how could you tell me such a thing!"

The servant now announced that Agnes's litter was waiting at the door; and any one who could have seen the affectionate farewell of the three—the noble lady, the slave, and the beggar, would have justly exclaimed, as people had often done before, "See how these Christians love one another!"

CHAPTER VIII.

THE FIRST DAY'S CONCLUSION.

If we linger a little time about the door, and see Agnes fairly off, and listen to the merry conversation between her and Cæcilia, in which Agnes asks her to allow herself to be accompanied home by one of her attendants, as it has grown dark, and the girl is amused at the lady's forgetfulness that day and night are the same to her, and that on this very account she is the appointed guide to thread the mazes of the catacombs, familiar to her as the streets of Rome, which she walks in safety at all hours; if thus we pass a little time before re-entering, to inquire how the mistress within fares after the day's adventures, we shall find the house turned topsyturvy. Slaves, with lamps and torches, are running about in every direction, looking for something or other that is lost, in every possible and impossible place. Euphrosyne insists it must be found; till at last the search is given up in despair. The reader will probably have anticipated the solution of the mystery. Syra had presented herself to have her wound re-dressed, according to orders, and the scarf which had bound it was no longer there. She could give no account of it, further than that she had taken it off, and put it on, certainly not so well as Euphrosyne had done it, and she gave the reason, for she scorned to tell a lie. Indeed, she had never missed it till now. The kind-hearted old nurse was much grieved at the loss, which she considered must be heavy to a poor slave-girl, as she probably reserved that object for the purchase of her liberty. And Syra too was sorry, but for reasons which she could not have made the good housekeeper comprehend. Euphrosyne had all the servants interrogated, and many

* 1 Cor. vii. 24.

† 1 Pet. ii. 14.

even searched, to Syra's great pain and confusion; and then ordered a grand general batue through every part of the house where Syra had been. Who for a moment could have dreamt of suspecting a noble guest at the master's table of purloining any article, valuable or not? The old lady therefore came to the conclusion, that the scarf had been spirited away by some magical process; and greatly suspected that the black slave Afra, who she knew could not bear Syra, had been using some spell to annoy the poor girl. For she believed the Moor to be a very Canidia,* being often obliged to let her go out alone at night, under pretence of gathering herbs at full moon for her cosmetics, as if plucked at any other time, they would not possess the same virtues; to procure deadly poisons Euphrosyne suspected, but in reality to join in the hideous orgies of Fetishism† with others of her race, or to hold interviews with such as consulted her imaginary art. It was not till all was given up, and Syra found herself alone, that on more coolly recollecting the incidents of the day, she remembered the pause in Fulvius's walk across the court, at the very spot where she had stood, and his hurried steps, after this, to the door. The conviction then flashed on her mind, that she must have dropped her kerchief, and that he must have picked it up. That he should have passed it with indifference she believed impossible. She was confident, therefore, that it was now in his possession. After attempting to speculate on the possible consequences of this misadventure, and coming to no satisfactory conclusion, she determined to commit the matter entirely to God, and sought that repose which a good conscience was sure to render balmy and sweet.

Fabiola, on parting with Agnes, retired to her apartment; and after the usual services had been rendered to her by her other two servants and Euphrosyne, she dismissed them with a gentler manner than ever she had shown before. As soon as they had retired, she went to recline upon the couch where first we found her; when, to her disgust, she discovered lying on it the style with which she had wounded Syra. She opened a chest, and threw it in with horror; nor did she ever again use any such weapon.

She took up the volume which she had last laid down, and which had greatly amused her; but it was quite insipid, and seemed most frivolous to her. She laid it down again, and gave free course to her thoughts on all that had happened. It struck her first what a wonderful child her cousin Agnes was,—how unselfish, how pure, how simple; how sensible, too, and even wise! She determined to be her protector, her elder sister in all things. She had observed, too, as well as her father, the frequent looks which Fulvius had fixed upon her; not, indeed, those libertine looks which she herself had often borne with scorn, but designing, cunning glances, such as she thought betrayed some scheme or art, of which Agnes might become the victim. She resolved to frustrate it, whatever it might be, and arrived at exactly the opposite conclusion to her father's about him. She made up her mind to prevent Fulvius having any access to Agnes, at least at her house; and then blamed herself for having brought one so young into the strange company which often met at her father's table, especially as she now found that her motives for doing so had been decidedly selfish. It was nearly at the same moment that Fulvius, tossing on his couch, had come to the determination never again, if possible, to go inside Fabius's door, and to resist or elude every invitation from him.

Fabiola had measured his character; had caught, with her penetrating eye, the affectation of his manner, and the cunning of his looks; and could not help contrasting him with the frank and generous Sebastian. "What a noble fellow that Sebastian is!" she said to herself. "How different from all the other youths that come here. Never a foolish word escapes his lips, never an unkind look darts from his bright and cheerful eye. How abstemious, as becomes a soldier, at the table; how modest, as befits a hero, about his own strength and bold actions in war, which others speak so much about. Oh! if he

only felt towards me as others pretend to do—" She did not finish the sentence, but a deep melancholy seemed to steal over her own soul.

Then Syra's conversation, and all that had resulted from it, passed again through her mind; it was painful to her, yet she could not help dwelling on it; and she felt as if that day were a crisis in her life. Her pride had been humbled by a slave, and her mind softened, she knew not how. Had her eyes been opened in that hour; and had she been able to look up above this world, she would have seen a soft cloud like incense, but tinged with a rich carnation, rising from the bedside of a kneeling slave (prayer and willing sacrifice of life breathed upwards together), which, when it struck the crystal footstool of a mercy-seat in heaven, fell down again as a dew of gentlest grace upon her arid heart.

She could not indeed see this; yet it was no less true; and wearied, at length she sought repose. But she too had a distressing dream. She saw a bright spot as in a delicious garden, richly illuminated by a light like noon-day, but inexpressibly soft; while all around was dark. Beautiful flowers formed the sward, plants covered with richest bloom grew festooned from tree to tree, on each of which glowed golden fruit. In the midst of this space she saw the poor blind girl, with her look of happiness on her cheerful countenance, seated on the ground; while on one side, Agnes, with her sweetest simple looks, and on the other, Syra, with her quiet patient smile, hung over her and caressed her. Fabiola felt an irresistible desire to be with them; it seemed to her that they were enjoying some felicity which she had never known or witnessed; and she thought they even beckoned her to join them. She ran forward to do so, when to her horror she found a wide, and black, and deep ravine, at the bottom of which roared a torrent between herself and them. By degrees its waters rose, till they reached the upper margin of the dyke, and there flowed, though so deep, yet sparkling and brilliant, and most refreshing. Oh, for courage to plunge into this stream, through which alone the gorge could be crossed, and land in safety on the other side! and still they beckoned, urging her on to try it. But as she was standing on the brink, clasping her hands in despair, Calpurnius seemed to emerge from the dark air around, with a thick heavy curtain stretched out, on which were worked all sorts of monstrous and hideous chimeras, most curiously running into, and underwoven with, each other; and this dark veil grew and grew, till it shut out the beautiful vision from her sight. She felt disconsolate, till she seemed to see a bright genius (as she called him), in whose features she fancied she traced a spiritualized resemblance to Sebastian, and whom she had noticed standing sorrowful at a distance, now approach her, and, smiling on her, fan her fevered face with his gold and purple wing; when she lost her vision in a calm and refreshing sleep.

CHAPTER IX.

M E T I N G S.

Or all the Roman hills, the most distinctly traceable on every side is undoubtedly the Palatine. Augustus having chosen it for his residence, successive emperors followed his example; but gradually transformed his modest residence into a *palace*, which covered the entire hill. Nero, not satisfied with its dimensions, destroyed the neighborhood by fire, and then extended the imperial residence to the neighboring Esquiline, taking in the whole space now occupied between the two hills by the Coliseum. Vespasian threw down that "golden house," of which the magnificent vaults remain, covered with beautiful paintings; and built the amphitheatre just mentioned, and other edifices, with its materials. The entrance to the palace was made soon after this period, from the *Via Sacra* or Sacred Way, close to the arch of Titus. After passing through a vestibule, the visitor found himself in a magnificent court, the plan of which can be distinctly traced. Turning from this, on

* A famous sorceress in Augustus's age.

† The worship of the evil Africa.

the left side, he entered into an immense square space, arranged and consecrated to Adonis by Domitian, and planted with trees, shrubs and flowers.

Still keeping to the left, you would enter into sets of chambers, constructed by Alexander Severus in honor of his mother, Mamma, whose name they bore. They looked out opposite to the Cœlian hill, just at the angle of it, which abuts upon the later triumphal arch of Constantine, and the fountain called the *Meta Sudans*.* Here was the apartment occupied by Sebastian as a tribune, or superior officer of the imperial guard. It consisted of a few rooms, most modestly furnished, as became a soldier and a Christian. His household was limited to a couple of freedmen, and a venerable matron, who had been his nurse, and loved him as a child. They were Christians, as were all the men in his cohort; partly by conversion, but chiefly by care in recruiting new soldiers.

It was a few evenings after the scenes described in the last chapter, that Sebastian, a couple of hours after dark, ascended the steps of the vestibule just described, in company with another youth, of whom we have already spoken. Pancratius admired and loved Sebastian with the sort of affection that an ardent young officer may be supposed to bear towards an older and gallant soldier, who receives him into his friendship. But it was not as to a soldier of Cæsar, but as to a champion of Christ, that the civilian boy looked up to the young tribune, whose generosity, noble-mindedness and valor were enshrouded in such a gentle, simple bearing, and were accompanied by such prudence and considerateness, as gave confidence and encouragement to all that dealt with him. And Sebastian loved Pancratius no less, on account of his single-hearted ardor, and the innocence and candor of his mind. But he well saw the dangers to which his youthful warmth and impetuosity might lead him; and he encouraged him to keep close to himself, that he might guide and perhaps sometimes restrain him.

As they were entering the palace, that part of which Sebastian's cohort guarded, he said to his companion, "Every time that I enter here, it strikes me how kind an act of Divine Providence it was, to plant almost at the very gate of Cæsar's palace, the arch which commemorates at once the downfall of the first great system that was antagonistic to Christianity, and the completion of the greatest prophecy of the Gospel—the destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman power.† I cannot but believe that another arch will one day arise to commemorate no less a victory over the second enemy of our religion, the heathen Roman empire itself."

"What! do you contemplate the overthrow of this vast empire, as the means of establishing Christianity?"

"God forbid! I would shed the last drop of my blood, as I shed my first, to maintain it. And depend upon it, when the empire is converted, it will not be by such gradual growth as we now witness, but by some means so unhuman, so divine, as we shall never, in our most sanguine longings, forecast; but all will exclaim: 'This is the change of the right hand of the Most High!'"

"No doubt; but your idea of a Christian triumphal arch supposes an earthly instrument; where do you imagine this to lie?"

"Why, Pancratius, my thoughts, I own, turn towards the family of one of the Augusti, as showing a slight germ of better thoughts: I mean Constantius Chlorus."

"But, Sebastian, how many of even our learned and good men will say, nay do say, if you speak thus to them, that similar hopes were entertained in the reigns of Alexander, Gordian, or Aurelian; yet ended in disappointment. Why, they ask, should we not expect the same results now?"

"I know it too well, my dear Pancratius, and bitterly have I often deplored those dark views which damp our energies; that lurking thought that vengeance is perpetual, and mercy temporary, that martyr's blood and virgin's prayer have no

power even to shorten times of visitation, and hasten hours of grace."

By this time they had reached Sebastian's apartment, the principal room of which was lighted and evidently prepared for some assembly. But opposite the door was a window open to the ground, and leading to a terrace that ran along that side of the building. The night looked so bright through it that they both instinctively walked across the room and stood upon the terrace. A lovely and splendid view presented itself to them. The moon was high in the heavens, swimming in them, as an Italian moon does; a round, full globe, not a flat surface, bathed all round in its own refulgent atmosphere. It dimmed indeed the stars near itself, but they seemed to have retired, in thicker and more brilliant clusters, into the distant corners of the azure sky. It was just such an evening as, years after, Monica and Augustine enjoyed from a window at Ostia, as they discoursed of heavenly things.

It is true, that below and around all was beautiful and grand. The Coliseum, or Flavian amphitheatre, rose at one side, in all its completeness; and the gentle murmur of the fountain, while its waters glistened in a silvery column, like the refluxing sea-wave gliding down a slanting rock, came soothingly on the ear. On the other side, the lofty building called the Septizonium of Severus, in front, towering above the Cœlian, the sumptuous baths of Caracalla reflected from their marble walls and stately pillars the radiance of the autumn moon. But all these massive monuments of earthly glory rose unheeded before the two Christian youths, as they stood silent; the elder with his right arm around his youthful companion's neck, and resting on his shoulder. After a long pause, he took up the thread of his last discourse, and said, in a softer tone, "I was going to show you, when we stepped out here, the very spot just below our feet, where I have often fancied the triumphal arch, to which I have alluded, would stand.* But who can think of such paltry things below, with the splendid vault above us, lighted up so brilliantly, as if on purpose to draw upwards our eyes and heart?"

"True, Sebastian; and I have sometimes thought that, if the under side of that firmament up to which the eye of man, however wretched and sinful, may look, be so beautiful and bright, what must that upper side be, down upon which the eye of boundless Glory deigns to glance? I imagine it to be like a richly-embroidered veil, through the texture of which a few points of golden thread may be allowed to pass; and these only reach us. How transcendently royal must be that upper surface, on which tread the lightsome feet of angels, and of the just made perfect."

"A graceful thought, Pancratius, and no less true. It makes the veil between us laborers here and the triumphal Church above, thin and easily to be passed."

"And pardon me, Sebastian," said the youth, with the same look up to his friend, as a few evenings before had met his mother's inspired gaze, "pardon me if, while you wisely speculate upon a future arch to record the triumph of Christianity, I see already before me, built and open, the arch through which we, feeble as we are, may lead the Church speedily to the triumph of glory, and ourselves to that of bliss."

"Where, my dear boy, where do you mean?"

Pancratius pointed steadily with his hand towards the left, and said: "There, my noble Sebastian; any of those open arches of the Flavian amphitheatre, which lead to its arena; over which, not denser than the outstretched canvas which shades our spectators, is that veil of which you spoke just now. But hark!"

"That was a lion's roar from beneath the Cœlian!" exclaimed Sebastian, surprised. "Wild beasts must have arrived at the *vivarium*† of the amphitheatre; for I know there were none there yesterday."

"Yes, hark!" continued Pancratius, not noticing the interruption. "These are the trumpet notes that summon us;

* "The sweating goal." It was an obelisk of brick (which yet remains), cased with marble, from the top of which issued water, and flowed down like a sheet of glass, all round it, into basin on the ground.

† The triumphal arch of Titus, on which are represented the spoils of the Temple.

* The arch of Constantine stands exactly under the spot where this scene is described.

† The place where live beasts were kept for the shows.

that is the music that must accompany us to our triumph!"

Both paused for a time, when Pancratius again broke the silence, saying, "This puts me in mind of a matter on which I want to take your advice, my faithful counsellor; will your company be soon arriving?"

"Not immediately; and they will drop in one by one; till they assemble, come into my chamber, where none will interrupt us."

They walked along the terrace, and entered the last room of the suite. It was at the corner of the hill, exactly opposite the fountain; and was lighted only by the rays of the moon, streaming through the open window on that side. The soldier stood near this, and Pancratius sat upon his small military couch.

"What is this great affair, Pancratius," said the officer, smiling, "upon which you wish to have my sage opinion?"

"Quite a trifle, I dare say," replied the youth, bashfully, "for a bold and generous man like you; but an important one to an unskilful and weak boy like me."

"A good and virtuous one, I doubt not; do let me hear it; and I promise you every assistance."

"Well, then, Sebastian—now don't think me foolish," proceeded Pancratius, hesitating and blushing at every word. "You are aware I have a quantity of useless plate at home—mere lumber, you know, in our plain way of living; and my dear mother, for anything I can say, won't wear the lots of old-fashioned trinkets, which are lying locked up, and of no use to anybody. I have no one to whom all this should descend. I am, and shall be, the last of my race. You have often told me, who in that case are a Christian's natural heirs,—the widow and the fatherless, the helpless and the indigent. Why should these wait my death, to have what by reversion is theirs? And if a persecution is coming, why run the risk of confiscation seizing them, or of plundering lictors stealing them, whenever our lives are wanted, to the utter loss of our rightful heirs?"

"Pancratius," said Sebastian, "I have listened without offering a remark to your noble suggestion. I wished you to have all the merit of uttering it yourself. Now, just tell me, what makes you doubt or hesitate about what I know you wish to do?"

"Why, to tell the truth, I feared it might be highly presumptuous and impertinent in one of my age to offer to do what people would be sure to imagine was something grand or generous; while I assure you, dear Sebastian, it is no such thing. For I shall not miss these things a bit; they are of no value to me whatever. But they will be to the poor, especially in the hard times coming."

"Of course Lucina consents?"

"Oh, no fear about that! I would not touch a grain of gold-dust without her even wishing it. But why I require your assistance is principally this. I should never be able to stand its being known that I presumed to do anything considered out of the way, especially in a boy. You understand me? So I want you, and beg of you, to get the distribution made at some other house; and as from a—say from one who needs much the prayers of the faithful, especially the poor, and desires to remain unknown."

"I will serve you with delight, my good and truly noble boy! Hush, did you not hear the Lady Fabiola's name just mentioned? There again, and with an epithet expressive of no good will."

Pancratius approached the window; two voices were conversing together so close under them that the cornice between them prevented their seeing the speakers, evidently a woman and a man. After a few minutes they walked out into the moonlight, almost as bright as day.

"I know that Moorish woman," said Sebastian; "it is Fabiola's black slave, Afra."

"And the man," added Pancratius, "is my late school-fellow, Corvinus."

They considered it their duty to catch, if possible, the thread

of what seemed a plot; but, as the speakers walked up and down, they could only make out a sentence here and there. We will not, however, confine ourselves to these parts, but give the entire dialogue. Only, a word first about the interlocutors.

Of the slave we know enough for the present. Corvinus was son, as we have said, to Tertullus, originally prefect of the Prætorium. This office, unknown in the republic, and of imperial creation, had, from the reign of Tiberius, gradually absorbed almost all civil as well as military power; and he who held it often discharged the duties of chief criminal judge in Rome. It required no little strength of nerve to occupy this post to the satisfaction of despotic and unsparing masters. To sit all day in a tribunal, surrounded with hideous implements of torture, unmoved by the moans or the shrieks of old men, youths, or women, on whom they were tried; to direct a cool interrogatory to one stretched upon the rack, and quivering in agony on one side, while the last sentence of beating to death with bullet-laden scourges was being executed on the other; to sleep calmly after such scenes, and rise with appetite for their repetition, was not an occupation to which every member of the bar could be supposed to aspire. Tertullus had been brought from Sicily to fill the office, not because he was a cruel, but because he was a cold-hearted man, not susceptible of pity or partiality. His tribunal, however, was Corvinus's early school; he could sit, while quite a boy, for hours at his father's feet, thoroughly enjoying the cruel spectacles before him, and angry when any one got off. He grew up sottish, coarse, and brutal; and not yet arrived at man's estate, his bloated and freckled countenance and bleary eyes, one of which was half closed, announced him to be already a dissolute and dissipated character. Without taste for anything refined, or ability for any learning, he united in himself a certain amount of animal courage and strength, and a considerable measure of low cunning. He had never experienced in himself a generous feeling, and he had never curbed an evil passion. No one had ever offended him, whom he did not hate, and pursue with vengeance. Two, above all, he had sworn never to forgive—the schoolmaster who had often chastised him for his sulky idleness, and the schoolfellow who had blessed him for his brutal contumely. Justice and mercy, good and evil done to him, were equally odious to him.

Tertullus had no fortune to give him, and he seemed to have little genius to make one. To become possessed of one, however, was all-important to his mind; for wealth, as the means of gratifying his desires, was synonymous with him to supreme felicity. A rich heiress, or rather her dower, seemed the object at which to aim. Too awkward, shy, and stupid to make himself a way in society, he sought other means, more kindred to his mind, for the attainment of his ambitious or avaricious desires. What these means were, his conversation with the black slave will best explain.

"I have come to meet you at the Meta Sudans again, for the fourth time, at this inconvenient hour. What news have you for me?"

"None, except that after to-morrow my mistress starts for her villa at Cajeta,* and of course I go with her. I shall want more money to carry on my operations in your favor."

"More still? You have had all I received from my father for months."

"Why, do you know what Fabiola is?"

"Yes, to be sure, the richest match in Rome."

"The haughty and cold-hearted Fabiola is not so easily to be won."

"But yet you promised me that your charms and potions would secure me her acceptance, at any rate her fortune. What expense can these things cause?"

"Very great indeed. The most precious ingredients are requisite, and must be paid for. And do you think I will go out at such an hour as this amidst the tombs of the Appian way, to gather my simples, without being properly rewarded? But how do you mean to second my efforts? I have told you this would hasten their success."

*Ustica.

"And how can I? You know I am not cut out by nature, or fitted by accomplishments, to make much impression on any one's affections. I would rather trust to the power of your black art."

"Then let me give you one piece of advice; if you have no grace or gift by which you can gain Fabiola's heart——"

"Fortune, you mean."

"They cannot be separated;—depend upon it, there is one thing which you may bring with you that is irresistible."

"What is that?"

"Gold."

"And where am I to get it? it is that I seek."

The black slave smiled maliciously, and said:

"Why cannot you get it as Fulvius does?"

"How does he get it?"

"By blood!"

"How do you know it?"

"I have made acquaintance with an old attendant that he has, who, if not as dark as I am in skin, fully makes up for it in his heart. His language and mine are sufficiently allied for us to be able to converse. He has asked me many questions about poisons, and pretended he would purchase my liberty, and take me back home as his wife; but, I have something better than that in prospect, I trust. However, I got all that I wanted out from him."

"And what was that?"

"Why, that Fulvius had discovered a great conspiracy against Dioclesian; and from the wink of the old man's awful eye, I understood he had hatched it first: and he had been sent with strong recommendations to Rome to be employed in the same line."

"But I have no ability either to make or to discover conspiracies, though I may have to punish them."

"One way, however, is easy."

"What is that?"

"In my country there are large birds, which you may attempt in vain to run down with the fleetest horses; but which, if you look about for them quietly, are the first to betray themselves, for they only hide their heads."

"What do you wish to represent by this?"

"The Christians. Is there not going to be a persecution of them soon?"

"Yes, and a most fierce one; such as has never been before."

"Then follow my advice. Do not tire yourself with hunting them down, and catching, after all, but mean prey; keep your eyes open and look about for one or two good fat ones, half trying to conceal themselves; pounce upon them, get a good share of their confiscation, and come with one good handful to get two in return."

"Thank you, thank you; I understand you. You are not fond of these Christians, then?"

"Fond of them? I hate the entire race. The spirits which I worship are the deadly enemies of their very name." And she grinned horrible a ghastly smile as she proceeded: "I suspect one of my fellow-servants is one. Oh, how I detest her!"

"What makes you think it?"

"In the first place, she would not tell a lie for any thing, and gets us all into dreadful scrapes by her absurd truthfulness."

"Good! what next?"

"Then she cares not for money or gifts; and so prevents our having them offered."

"Better!"

"And, moreover, she is ——" the last word died in the ear of Corvinus, who replied:

"Well, indeed, I have to-day been out of the gate to meet a caravan of your countryfolk coming in; but you beat them all!"

"Indeed!" exclaimed Afra, with delight, "who were they?"

"Simply Africans,"* replied Corvinus, with a laugh, "lions, panthers, leopards."

"Wretch! do you insult me thus?"

"Come, come, be pacified. They are brought expressly to rid you of your hateful Christians: let us part friends. Here is your money. But let it be the last; and let me know when the philtres begin to work. I will not forget your hint about Christian money. It is quite to my taste."

As he departed by the Sacred Way, she pretended to go along the Carinae, the street between the Palatine and the Caelian mounts; then turned back, and looking after him, exclaimed: "Fool! to think that I am going to try experiments for you on a person of Fabiola's character!"

She followed him at a distance; but as Sebastian, to his amazement, thought, turned into the vestibule of the palace. He determined at once to put Fabiola on her guard against this new plot; but this could not be done till her return from the country.

CHAPTER X.

OTHER MEETINGS.

WHEN the two youths returned to the room by which they had entered the apartment, they found the expected company assembled. A frugal repast was laid upon the table, principally as a blind to any intruder who might happen unexpectedly to enter. The assembly was large and varied, containing clergy and laity, men and women. The purpose of the meeting was to concert proper measures, in consequence of something which had lately occurred in the palace. This we must briefly explain.

Sebastian, enjoying the unbounded confidence of the emperor, employed all his influence in propagating the Christian faith within the palace. Numerous conversions had gradually been made; but shortly before this period there had been a wholesale one effected, the particulars of which are recorded in the genuine acts of this glorious soldier. In virtue of former laws many Christians were seized and brought to trial, which often ended in death. Two brothers, Marcus and Marcellianus, had been so accused, and were expecting execution; when their friends, admitted to see them, implored them with tears to save their lives by apostasy. They seemed to waver; they promised to deliberate. Sebastian heard of this, and rushed to save them. He was too well known to be refused admittance, and he entered into their gloomy prison like an angel of light. It consisted of a strong room in the house of the magistrate to whose care they had been entrusted. The place of confinement was generally left to that officer; and here Tranquillinus, the father of the two youths, had obtained a respite for them of thirty days to try to shake their constancy; and, to second his efforts, Nicostratus, the magistrate, had placed them in custody in his own house. Sebastian's was a bold and perilous office. Besides the two Christian captives, there were gathered in the place sixteen heathen prisoners; there were the parents of the unfortunate youths weeping over them, and caressing them, to allure them from their threatened doom; there was the gaoler, Claudius, and there was the magistrate, Nicostratus, with his wife, Zoë, drawn thither by the compassionate wish of seeing the youths snatched from their fate. Could Sebastian hope that of this crowd not one would be found whom a sense of official duty, or a hope of pardon, or hatred of Christianity, might impel to betray him if he avowed himself a Christian? And did he not know that such a betrayal involved his death?

He knew it well; but what cared he? If three victims would thus be offered to God instead of two, so much the better; all that he dreaded was, that there should be none. The room was a banqueting-hall, but seldom opened in the day, and consequently requiring very little light; what it had entered only, as in the Pantheon, by an opening in the roof; and Sebastian, anxious to be seen by all, stood in the ray which now darted through it, strong and brilliant where it beat, but leaving the rest of the apartment almost dark. It broke against the gold and jewels of his rich tribune's armor, and, as he moved, scattered itself in sparks of brilliant hues

* The generic name for the wild beasts of that continent, as opposed to bears and others from the north.

into the darkest recesses of that gloom; while it beamed with serene steadiness upon his uncovered head, and displayed his noble features, softened by an emotion of tender grief, as he looked upon the two vacillating confessors. It was some moments before he could give vent in words to the violence of his grief, till at length it broke forth in impassioned tones.

"Holy and venerable brothers," he exclaimed, "who have borne witness to Christ; who are imprisoned for Him; whose limbs are marked by chains worn for His sake; who have tasted torments with Him,—I ought to fall at your feet and do you homage, and ask your prayers, instead of standing before you as your exhorter, still less as your reprover. Can this be true which I have heard, that while angels were putting the last flower to your crowns, you have bid them pause, and even thought of telling them to unweave them, and scatter their blossoms to the winds? Can I believe that you who have already your feet on the threshold of paradise, are thinking of drawing them back, to tread once more the valley of exile and of tears?"

The two youths hung down their heads and wept in humble confession of their weakness. Sebastian proceeded:

"You cannot meet the eye of a poor soldier like me, the least of Christ's servants: how then will you stand the angry glance of the Lord, whom you are about to deny before men (but cannot in your hearts deny), on that terrible day, when He, in return, will deny you before His angels? When, instead of standing manfully before Him, like good and faithful servants, as to-morrow ye might have done, you shall have to come into His presence after having crawled through a few more years of infamy, disowned by the Church, despised by its enemies, and, what is worse, gnawed by an undying worm, and victims of a sleepless remorse?"

"Cease; oh, in pity cease, young man, whoever thou art," exclaimed Tranquillinus, the father of the youths. "Speak not thus severely to my sons: it was, I assure thee, to their mother's tears and to my entreaties that they had begun to yield, and not to the tortures which they have endured with such fortitude. Why should they leave their wretched parents to misery and sorrow? Does thy religion command this, and dost thou call it holy?"

"Wait in patience, my good old man," said Sebastian, with the kindest look and accent, "and let me speak first with thy sons. They know what I mean, which thou canst not yet; but with God's grace, thou too shalt soon. Your father, indeed, is right in saying that for his sake and your mother's you have been deliberating whether you should not prefer them to Him who told you 'He that loveth father or mother more than Me, is not worthy of Me.' You cannot hope to purchase for these your aged parents eternal life by your own loss of it. Will you make them Christians by abandoning Christianity? Will you make them soldiers of the Cross by deserting its standard? Will you teach them that its doctrines are more precious than life, by preferring life to them? Do you want to gain for them, not the mortal life of the perishable body, but the eternal life of the soul? Then hasten yourselves to its acquisition; throw down at the feet of your Saviour the crowns you will receive, and entreat for your parents' salvation."

"Enough, enough, Sebastian, we are resolved," cried out together both the brothers.

"Claudius," said one, "put on me again the chains you have taken off."

"Nicostratus," added the other, "give orders for the sentence to be carried out."

Yet neither Claudius nor Nicostratus moved.

"Farewell, dear father; adieu, dearest mother," they in turns said, embracing their parents,

"No," replied the father, "we part no more. Nicostratus, go tell Chromatius that I am from this moment a Christian with my sons; I will die with them for a religion which can make heroes thus of boys." "And I," continued the mother, "will not be separated from my husband and children."

The scene which followed baffles description. All were

moved; all wept; the prisoners joined in the tumult of these new affections; and Sebastian saw himself surrounded by a group of men and women smitten by grace, softened by its influences, and subdued by its power; yet all was lost if one remained behind. He saw the danger, not to himself, but to the Church, if a sudden discovery were made, and those souls fluttering upon the confines of life. Some hung upon his arms; some clasped his knees; some kissed his feet, as though he had been a spirit of peace, such as visited Peter in his dungeon at Jerusalem.

Two alone had expressed no thought. Nicostratus was indeed moved, but by no means conquered. His feelings were agitated, but his convictions unshaken. His wife, Zoë, knelt before Sebastian with a beseeching look and outstretched arms, but she spoke not a word.

"Come, Sebastian," said the keeper of the records, for such was Nicostratus's office; "it is time for thee to depart. I cannot but admire the sincerity of belief, and the generosity of heart, which can make thee act as thou hast done, and which impel these young men to death; but my duty is imperative, and must overweigh my private feelings."

"And dost not thou believe with the rest?"

"No, Sebastian, I yield not so easily; I must have stronger evidences than even thy virtue."

"Oh, speak to him then, thou!" said Sebastian to Zoë; "speak, faithful wife; speak to thy husband's heart; for I am mistaken indeed, if those looks of thine tell me not that *thou* at least believest."

Zoë covered her face with her hands, and burst into a passion of tears.

"Thou hast touched her to the quick, Sebastian," said her husband; "knowest thou not that she is dumb?"

"I knew it not, noble Nicostratus; for when last I saw her in Asia she could speak."

"For six years," replied the other, with a faltering voice, "her once eloquent tongue has been paralyzed, and she has not uttered a single word."

Sebastian was silent for a moment; then suddenly he threw out his arms, and stretched them forth, as the Christians always did in prayer, and raised his eyes to heaven; then burst forth in these words:

"O God! Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the beginning of this work is Thine; let its accomplishment be Thine alone. Put forth Thy power, for it is needed; intrust it for once to the weakest and poorest of instruments. Let me, though most unworthy, so wield the sword of Thy victorious Cross, as that the spirits of darkness may fly before it, and Thy salvation may embrace us all! Zoë look up once more to me."

All were hushed in silence, when Sebastian, after a moment's silent prayer, with his right hand made over her mouth the sign of the cross, saying: "Zoë, speak: dost thou believe?"

"I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ," she replied, in a clear and firm voice, and fell upon Sebastian's feet.

It was almost a shriek that Nicostratus uttered, as he threw himself on his knees, and bathed Sebastian's right hand with tears.

The victory was complete. Every one was gained; and immediate steps were taken to prevent discovery. The person responsible for the prisoners could take them where he wished; and Nicostratus transferred them all, with Tranquillinus and his wife, to the full liberty of his house. Sebastian lost no time in putting them under the care of the holy priest Polycarp, of the title of St. Pastor. It was a case so peculiar, and requiring such concealment, and the times were so threatening, and all new irritations had so much to be avoided, that the instruction was hurried, and continued night and day; so that baptism was quickly administered.

The new Christian flock was encouraged and consoled by a fresh wonder. Tranquillinus, who was suffering severely from the gout, was restored to instant and complete health by baptism. Chromatius was the prefect of the city, to whom Nicostratus was liable for his prisoners; and this officer could not long conceal from him what had happened. It was indeed

a matter of life or death to them all; but, strengthened now by faith, they were prepared for either. Chromatius was a man of upright character, and not fond of persecution; and listened with interest to the account of what had occurred. But when he heard of Tranquillinus's cure, he was greatly struck. He was himself a victim to the same disease, and suffered agonies of pain. "If," he said, "what you relate be true, and if I can have personal experience of this healing power, I certainly will not resist its evidence."

Sebastian was sent for. To have administered baptism without faith preceding, as an experiment of its healing virtue, would have been a superstition. Sebastian took another course, which will be later described, and Chromatius completely recovered. He received baptism soon after, with his son Tiburtinus.

It was clearly impossible for him to continue in his office, and he had accordingly resigned it to the emperor. Tertullus, the father of the hopeful Corvinus, and prefect of the Prætorium, had been named his successor; so the reader will perceive that the events, just related from the Acts of St. Sebastian, had occurred a little before our narrative begins; for, in an early chapter, we spoke of Corvinus's father as already prefect of the city.

Let us now come down again to the evening, in which Sebastian and Pancratius met most of the persons above enumerated in the officer's chamber. Many of them resided in, or about, the palace; and besides them were present Castulus, who held a high situation at court,* and his wife Irene. Several previous meetings had been held, to decide upon some plan for securing the completer instruction of the converts, and for withdrawing from observation so many persons, whose change of life and retirement from office would excite wonder and inquiry. Sebastian had obtained permission from the emperor for Chromatius to retire to a country-house in Campania; and it had been arranged that a considerable number of the neophytes should join him there, and, forming one household, should go on with religious instruction, and unite in common offices of piety. The season was come when everybody retired to the country, and the emperor himself was going to the coast of Naples, and thence would take a journey in southern Italy. It was therefore a favorable moment for carrying out the preconcerted plan. Indeed the Pope, we are told, on the Sunday following this conversion, celebrated the divine mysteries in the house of Nicostratus, and proposed this withdrawal from the city.

At this meeting all details were arranged; different parties were to start, in the course of the following days, by various roads—some direct by the Appian, some along the Latin, others round by Tibur and a mountain road, through Arpinum; but all were to meet at the villa, not far from Capua. Through the whole discussion of these somewhat tedious arrangements, Torquatus, one of the former prisoners, converted by Sebastian's visit, showed himself forward, impatient and impetuous. He found fault with every plan, seemed discontented with the directions given him, spoke almost contemptuously of this flight from danger, as he called it; and boasted that, for his part, he was ready to go into the Forum on the morrow, and overthrow any altar, or confront any judge, as a Christian. Everything was said and done to soothe, and even to cool him; and it was felt to be most important, that he should be taken with the rest into the country. He insisted, however, upon going his own way.

Only one more point remained to be decided: it was, who should head the little colony, and direct its operations. Here was renewed a contest of love between the holy priest Polycarp and Sebastian; each wishing to remain in Rome, and have the first chance of martyrdom. But now the difference was cut short by a letter brought in, from the Pope, addressed to his "Beloved son Polycarp, priest of the title of St. Pastor," in which he commanded him to accompany the converts, and leave Sebastian to the arduous duty of encouraging confessors, and protecting Christians in Rome. To hear was to obey; and the meeting broke up with a prayer of thanksgiving.

Sebastian, after bidding affectionate farewell to his friends, insisted upon accompanying Pancratius home. As they were leaving the room, the latter remarked, "Sebastian, I do not like that Torquatus. I fear he will give us trouble."

"To tell the truth," answered the soldier, "I would rather he were different; but we must remember, that he is a neophyte, and will improve in time, and by grace."

As they passed into the entrance-court of the palace, they heard a Babel of uncouth sounds, with coarse laughter and occasional yells, proceeding from the adjoining yard, in which were the quarters of the Mauritanian archers. A fire seemed to be blazing in the midst of it, for the smoke and sparks rose above the surrounding porticoes.

Sebastian accosted the sentinel in the court where they were, and asked: "Friend, what is going on there among our neighbors?"

"The black slave," he replied, "who is their priestess, and who is betrothed to their captain, if she can purchase her freedom, has come in for some midnight rites, and this horrid turmoil takes place every time she comes."

"Indeed!" said Pancratius, "and can you tell me what is the religion these Africans follow?"

"I do not know, sir," replied the legionary, "unless they be what are called Christians."

"What makes you think so?"

"Why, I have heard that the Christians meet by night, and sing detestable songs, and commit all sorts of crimes; and cook and eat the flesh of a child murdered for the purpose*—just what might seem to be going on here."

"Good night, comrade," said Sebastian; and then exclaimed, as they were issuing from the vestibule, "Is it not strange, Pancratius, that, in spite of all our efforts, we who are conscious that we worship the only One living God in spirit and truth, who know what care we take to keep ourselves undefiled by sin, and who would die rather than speak an unclean word, should yet, after 300 years, be confounded by the people with the followers of the most degraded superstitions, and have our worship ranked with the very idolatry, which above all things we abhor? 'How long, O Lord! how long?'"

"So long," said Pancratius, pausing on the steps outside the vestibule, and looking at the now-declining moon, "so long as we shall continue to walk in this pale light, and until the Sun of Justice shall rise upon our country in His beauty, and enrich it with His splendor. Sebastian, tell me, whence do you best like to see the sun rise?"

"The most lovely sunrise I have ever seen," replied the soldier, as if humoring his companion's fanciful question, "was from the top of the Latial mountain,† by the temple of Jupiter. The sun rose behind the mountain, and projected its huge shadow like a pyramid over the plain, and far upon the sea; then, as it rose higher, this lessened and withdrew; and every moment some new object caught the light, first the galleys and skiffs upon the water, then the shore with its dancing waves; and by degrees one white edifice after the other sparkled in the fresh beams, till at last majestic Rome itself, with its towering pinnacles, basked in the effulgence of day. It was a glorious sight, indeed; such as could not have been witnessed or imagined by those below."

"Just what I should have expected, Sebastian," observed Pancratius; "and so will it be, when that more brilliant sun rises fully upon this benighted country. How beautiful will it then be to behold the shades retiring, and each moment one and another of the charms, as yet concealed, of our holy faith and worship starting into light, till the imperial city itself shines forth a holy type of the city of God. Will they who live in those times see these beauties, and worthily value them? Or, will they look only at the narrow space around them, and hold their hands before their eyes, to shade them from the sudden glare? I know not, dear Sebastian, but I hope that you and I will look upon that grand spectacle, from where alone it can be duly ap-

* It is not mentioned what it precisely was.

* These were the popular ideas of Christian worship.

† Now Monte Cavo, above Albano.

preciated, from a mountain higher than Jupiter's, be he Alban or be he Olympian,—dwelling on that holy mount, whereon stands the Lamb, from whose feet flow the streams of life.”*

They continued their walk in silence through the brilliantly-lighted streets;† and when they had reached Lucina's house, and had affectionately bid one another good night, Pancratius seemed to hesitate a moment, and then said :

“Sebastian, you said something this evening, which I should much like to have explained.”

“What was it?”

“When you were contending with Polycarp, about going into Campania, or remaining in Rome, you promised that if you stayed you would be most cautious, and not expose yourself to unnecessary risks; then you added, that there was one purpose in your mind which would effectually restrain you; but when that was accomplished, you would find it difficult to check your longing ardor to give your life for Christ.”

“And why, Pancratius, do you desire so much to know this foolish thought of mine?”

“Because I own I am really curious to learn what can be the object, high enough to check you in your aspiration, after what I know you consider to be the very highest of a Christian's aim.”

“I am sorry, my dear boy, that it is not in my power to tell you now. But you shall know it sometime.”

“Do you promise me?”

“Yes, most solemnly. God bless you!”

CHAPTER XL

A TALK WITH THE READER.

We will take advantage of the holiday which Rome is enjoying, sending out its inhabitants to the neighboring hills, or to the whole line of sea-coast from Genoa to Paestum, for amusement on land and water: and, in a merely didactic way, endeavor to communicate to our reader some information, which may throw light on what we have already written, and prepare them for what will follow.

From the very compressed form in which the early history of the Church is generally studied, and from the unchronological arrangement of the saints' biographies, as we usually read them, we may easily be led to an erroneous idea of the state of our first Christian ancestors. This may happen in two different ways.

We may come to imagine, that during the first three centuries the Church was suffering unrespite, under active persecution; that the faithful worshipped in fear and trembling, and almost lived in the catacombs; that bare existence, with scarcely an opportunity for outward development or inward organization, none for splendor, was all that religion could enjoy; that, in fine, it was a period of conflict and of tribulation, without an interval of peace and consolation. On the other hand, we may suppose, that those three centuries were divided into epochs by ten distinct persecutions, some of longer and some of shorter duration, but definitely separated from one another by breathing times of complete rest.

Either of these views is erroneous; and we desire to state more accurately the real condition of the Christian Church, under the various circumstances of that most pregnant portion of her history.

When once persecution had broken loose upon the Church, it may be said never entirely to have relaxed its hold, till her final pacification under Constantine. An edict of persecution once issued by an emperor was seldom recalled; and though the rigor of its enforcement might gradually relax or cease, through the accession of a milder ruler, still it never be-

came completely a dead letter, but was a dangerous weapon in the hands of a cruel or bigoted governor of a city or province. Hence, in the intervals between the greater general persecutions, ordered by a new decree, we find many martyrs who owed their crowns either to popular fury or to the hatred of Christianity in local rulers. Hence also we read of a bitter persecution being carried on in one part of the empire, while other portions enjoyed complete peace.

Perhaps a few examples of the various phases of persecution will illustrate the real relations of the primitive Church with the State, better than mere description; and the more learned reader can pass over this digression, or must have the patience to hear repeated what he is so familiar with, that it will seem commonplace.

Trajan was by no means one of the cruel emperors; on the contrary, he was habitually just and merciful. Yet, though he published no new edicts against the Christians, many noble martyrs—amongst them St. Ignatius, bishop of Antioch; at Rome, and St. Simeon at Jerusalem—glorified their Lord in his reign. Indeed, when Pliny the younger consulted him on the manner in which he should deal with Christians, who might be brought before him as governor of Bithynia, the emperor gave him a rule which exhibits the lowest standard of justice: that they were not to be sought out, but if accused, they were to be punished. Adrian, who issued no decree of persecution, gave a similar reply to a similar question from Serenus Granianus, pro-consul of Asia. And under him, too, and even by his own orders, cruel martyrdom was suffered by the intrepid Symphorosa and her seven sons at Tibur, or Tivoli. A beautiful inscription found in the catacombs mentions Marius, a young officer, who shed his blood for Christ under this emperor.* Indeed, St. Justin Martyr, the great apologist of Christianity, informs us that he owed his conversion to the constancy of the martyrs under this emperor.

In like manner, before the Emperor Septimus Severus had published his persecuting edicts, many Christians had suffered torments and death. Such were the celebrated martyrs of Scillita in Africa, and SS. Perpetua and Felicitas, with their companions, the Acts of whose martyrdom, containing the diary of the first noble lady, twenty years of age, brought down by herself to the eve of her death, form one of the most touching and exquisitely beautiful documents preserved to us from the ancient Church.

From these historical facts it will be evident that while there was from time to time a more active, severe and general persecution of the Christian name all through the empire, there were partial and local cessations, and sometimes even a general suspension of its rigor. An occurrence of this sort has secured for us most interesting information, connected with our subject. When the persecution of Severus had relaxed in other parts, it happened that Scapula, pro-consul of Africa, prolonged it in his province with unrelenting cruelty. He had condemned, among others, Mavilus of Adrumetum to be devoured by beasts, when he was seized with a severe illness. Tertullian, the oldest Christian Latin writer, addressed a letter to him, in which he bids him take warning from this visitation, and repent of his crimes; reminding him of many judgments which had befallen cruel judges of the Christians in various parts of the world. Yet such was the charity of these holy men, that he tells him they were offering up earnest prayers for their enemy's recovery!

He then goes on to inform him that he may very well fulfil his duties without practising cruelty, by acting as other magistrates had done. For instance, Cincius Severus suggested to the accused the answers they should make, to be acquitted. Vesprenius Candidus dismissed a Christian on the ground that his condemnation would encourage tumults. Asper, seeing one ready to yield upon the application of slight torments, would not press him further: and expressed regret that such a case should have been brought before him. Pudens, on reading an act of accusation, declared the title informal, because calumnious and tore it up.

* “Vidi supra montem Agnum stantem, de sub cujus pede fons vivus emanat.”—*Office of St. Clement.*

† Ammianus Marcellinus tells us that, at the decline of the empire, the streets at night were lighted so as to rival day. “It hæc confitentur agebat (Gallus) ubi pernoctantium luminum claritudo dierum solis instans fulgorem.” Lib. xiv. c. 1.

We thus see how much might depend upon the temper, and perhaps the tendencies, of governors and judges, in the enforcing even of imperial edicts of persecution. And St. Ambrose tells us that some governors boasted that they had brought back from their provinces their swords unstained with blood (*incruentos enses*).

We can also easily understand how, at any particular time, a savage persecution might rage in Gaul, or Africa, or Asia, while the main part of the Church was enjoying peace. But Rome was undoubtedly the place most subject to frequent outbreaks of the hostile spirit; so that it might be considered as the privilege of its pontiffs, during the first three centuries, to bear the witness of blood to the faith which they taught. To be elected Pope was equivalent to being promoted to martyrdom.

At the period of our narrative, the Church was in one of those longer intervals of comparative peace, which gave opportunity for great development. From the death of Valerian, in 268, there had been no new formal persecution, though the interval is glorified by many noble martyrdoms. During such periods, the Christians were able to carry out their religious system with completeness, and even with splendor. The city was divided into districts or parishes, each having its title, or church, served by priests, deacons, and inferior ministers. The poor were supported, the sick visited, catechumens instructed; the Sacraments were administered, daily worship was practised, and the penitential canons were enforced by the clergy of each title; and collections were made for these purposes, and others connected with religious charity, and its consequence, hospitality.* It is recorded, that in 250, during the pontificate of Cornelius, there were in Rome forty-six priests, a hundred and fifty-four inferior ministers, who were supported by the alms of the faithful, together with fifteen hundred poor.* This number of the priests pretty nearly corresponds to that of the titles, which St. Optatus tells us there were in Rome.

Although the tombs of the martyrs in the catacombs continued to be objects of devotion in these more peaceful intervals, and these asylums of the persecuted were kept in order and repair, they did not then serve for the ordinary places of worship. The churches to which we have already alluded were often public, large, and even splendid; and heathens used to be present at the sermons delivered in them, and such portions of the liturgy as were open to catechumens. But generally they were in private houses, probably made out of the large halls, or *triclinia*, which the nobler mansions contained. Thus we know that many of the titles in Rome were originally of that character. Tertullian mentions Christian cemeteries under a name, and with circumstances, which show that they were above ground, for he compares them to "threshing-floors," which were necessarily exposed to the air.

A custom of ancient Roman life will remove an objection which may arise, as to how considerable multitudes could assemble in these places, without attracting attention, and consequently persecution. It was usual for what may be called a *levée* to be held every morning by the rich, attended by dependents, or clients, and messengers from their friends, either slaves or freedmen, some of whom were admitted into the inner court, to the master's presence, while others only presented themselves, and were dismissed. Hundreds might thus go in and out of a great house, in addition to the crowd of domestic slaves, tradespeople, and others who had access to it, through the principal or the back entrance, and little or no notice would be taken of the circumstance.

There is another important phenomenon in the social life of the early Christians, which one would hardly know how to believe, were not evidence of it brought before us in the most authentic Acts of the martyrs, and in ecclesiastical history. It is, the concealment which they contrived to practise. No doubt can be entertained, that persons were moving in the highest society, were occupying conspicuous public situations, were near the persons of the emperors, who were Christians; and yet were not suspected to be such by their most intimate

heathen friends. Nay, cases occurred where the nearest relatives were kept in total ignorance on this subject. No lie, no dissembling, no action especially, inconsistent with Christian morality or Christian truth, was ever permitted to ensure such secrecy. But every precaution compatible with complete uprightness was taken to conceal Christianity from the public eye.*

However necessary this prudential course might be, to prevent any wanton persecution, its consequences fell often heavily upon those who held it. The heathen world, the world of power, of influence, and of state, the world which made laws as best suited it, and executed them, the world that loved earthly prosperity and hated faith, felt itself surrounded, filled, penetrated by a mysterious system, which spread, no one could see how, and exercised an influence derived no one knew whence. Families were startled at finding a son or daughter to have embraced this new law, with which they were not aware that they had been in contact, and which, in their heated fancies and popular views, they considered stupid, grovelling, and anti-social. Hence the hatred of Christianity was political as well as religious; the system was considered as un-Roman, as having an interest opposed to the extension and prosperity of the empire, and as obeying an unseen and spiritual power. The Christians were pronounced *irreligiosi in Cæsares*, "disloyal to the emperors," and that was enough. Hence their security and peace depended much upon the state of popular feeling; when any demagogue or fanatic could succeed in rousing this, neither their denial of the charges brought against them, nor their peaceful demeanor, nor the claims of civilized life, could suffice to screen them from such measure of persecution as could be safely urged against them.

After these digressive remarks, we will resume, and unite again, the broken thread of our narrative.

CHAPTER XII.

THE WOLF AND THE FOX.

THE hints of the African slave had not been thrown away upon the sordid mind of Corvinus. Her own hatred of Christianity arose from the circumstance, that a former mistress of hers had become a Christian, and had manumitted all her other slaves; but, feeling it wrong to turn so dangerous a character as Afra, or rather Jubala (her proper name), upon the world, had transferred her to another proprietor.

Corvinus had often seen Fulvius at the baths and other places of public resort, had admired and envied him, for his appearance, his dress, his conversation. But with his untoward shyness, or moroseness, he could never have found courage to address him, had he not now discovered, that though a more refined, he was not a less profound, villain than himself. Fulvius's wit and cleverness might supply the want of these qualities in his own sottish composition, while his own brute force, and unfeeling recklessness, might be valuable auxiliaries to those higher gifts. He had the young stranger in his power, by the discovery which he had made of his real character. He determined, therefore, to make an effort, and enter into an alliance with one who otherwise might prove a dangerous rival.

It was about ten days after the meeting last described, that Corvinus went to stroll in Pompey's gardens. These covered the space round his theatre, in the neighborhood of the present Piazza Farnese. A conflagration in the reign of Carinus had lately destroyed the scene, as it was called, of the edifice, and Dioclesian had repaired it with great magnificence. The gardens were distinguished from others by rows of plane-trees, which formed a delicious shade. Statues of wild beasts, foun-

* No domestic concealment surely could be more difficult than that of a wife's religion from her husband. Yet Tertullian supposes this to have been not uncommon. For, speaking of a married woman communicating her self at home, according to practice in those ages of persecu- on, he says, "Let not your husband know what you taste secretly, before every other food; and if he shall know of the bread, may he not know it to be what it is called?" *Ad Uz. r. lib. ii. c. 5.* Whereas, in another place, he writes of a Catholic husband and wife giving communion to one another. *De Monogamia. c. 11.*

tains, and artificial brooks, profusely adorned them. While sauntering about, Corvinus caught sight of Fulvius, and made up to him.

"What do you want with me?" asked the foreigner, with a look of surprise and scorn at the slovenly dress of Corvinus,

"To have a talk with you, which may turn out to your advantage—and mine."

"What can you propose to me, with the first of these recommendations? No doubt at all as to the second."

"Fulvius, I am a plain-spoken man, and have no pretensions to your cleverness and elegance; but we are both of one trade, and both consequently of one mind."

Fulvius started, and deeply colored; then said, with a contemptuous air, "What do you mean, sirrah?"

"If you double your fist," rejoined Corvinus, "to show me the fine rings on your delicate fingers, it is very well. But if you mean to threaten by it, you may as well put your hand again into the folds of your toga. It is more graceful."

"Cut this matter short, sir. Again I ask, what do you mean?"

"This, Fulvius," and he whispered into his ear, "that you are a spy and an informer."

Fulvius was staggered; then rallying, said, "What right have you to make such an odious charge against me?"

"You discovered" (with a strong emphasis) "a conspiracy in the East, and Dioclesian—"

Fulvius stopped him, and asked, "What is your name, and who are you?"

"I am Corvinus, the son of Tertullus, prefect of the city,"

This seemed to account for all; and Fulvius said, in subdued tones, "No more here; I see friends coming. Meet me disguised at day-break to-morrow in the Patrician Street,* under the portico of the Baths of Novatus. We will talk more at leisure."

Corvinus returned home, not ill-satisfied with his first attempt at diplomacy; he procured a garment shabbier than his own from one of his father's slaves, and was at the appointed spot by the first dawn of day. He had to wait a long time, and had almost lost patience, when he saw his new friend approach.

Fulvius was well wrapped up in a large over-coat, and wore its hood over his face. He thus saluted Corvinus,

"Good morning, comrade; I fear I have kept you waiting in the cold morning air, especially as you are thinly clad."

"I own," replied Corvinus, "that I should have been tired, had I not been immensely amused and yet puzzled, by what I have been observing."

"What is that?"

"Why, from an early hour, long, I suspect, before my coming, there have been arriving here from every side, and entering into that house, by the back door in the narrow street, the rarest collection of miserable objects that you ever saw; the blind, the lame, the maimed, the decrepit, the deformed of every possible shape; while by the front door several persons have entered, evidently of a different class."

"Whose dwelling is it, do you know? It looks a large old house, but rather out of condition."

"It belongs to a very rich, and, it is said, very miserly old patrician. But look! there come some more."

At that moment a very feeble man, bent down by age, was approaching, supported by a young and cheerful girl, who chatted most kindly to him as she supported him.

"We are just there," she said to him; "a few more steps, and you shall sit down and rest."

"Thank you, my child," replied the poor old man; "how kind of you to come for me so early!"

"I knew," she said, "you would want help; and as I am the most useless person about, I thought I would go and fetch you."

"I have always heard that blind people are selfish, and it seems but natural; but you, Cæcilia, are certainly an exception."

"Not at all; this is only my way of showing selfishness."

"How do you mean?"

"Why, first, I get the advantage of your eyes, and then I get the satisfaction of supporting you. 'I was an eye to the blind,' that is you; and 'a foot to the lame,' that is myself."*

They reached the door as she spoke these words.

"That girl is blind," said Fulvius to Corvinus. "Do you not see how straight she walks, without looking right or left?"

"So she is," answered the other. "Surely this is not the place so often spoken of, where beggars meet, and the blind see, and the lame walk, and all feast together? But yet I observed these people were so different from the mendicants on the Arician bridge.† They appeared respectable and even cheerful; and not one asked me for alms as he passed."

"It is very strange; and I should like to discover the mystery. A good job might, perhaps, be got out of it. The old patrician, you say, is very rich?"

"Immensely!"

"Humph! How could one manage to get in?"

"I have it! I will take off my shoes, screw up one leg like a cripple, and join the next group of queer ones that come, and go boldly in, doing as they do."

"That will hardly succeed; depend upon it every one of these people is known at the house."

"I am sure not, for several of them asked me if this was the house of the Lady Agnes."

"Of whom?" asked Fulvius, with a start.

"Why do you look so?" said Corvinus. "It is the house of her parents; but she is better known than they, as being a young heiress, nearly as rich as her cousin Fabiola."

Fulvius paused for a moment; a strong suspicion, too subtle and important to be communicated to this rude companion, flashed through his mind. He said, therefore, to Corvinus.

"If you are sure these people are not familiar at the house, try your plan. I have met the lady before, and will venture by the front door. Thus we shall have a double chance."

"Do you know what I am thinking, Fulvius?"

"Something very bright, no doubt."

"That when you and I join in any enterprise, we shall always have two chances."

"What are they?"

"The fox's and the wolf's, when they conspire to rob a fold."

Fulvius cast on him a look of disdain, which Corvinus returned by a hideous leer; and they separated for their respective posts.

CHAPTER XIII.

CHARITY.

As we do not choose to enter the house of Agnes, either with the wolf or with the fox, we will take a more spiritual mode of doing so, and find ourselves at once inside.

The parents of Agnes represented noble lines of ancestry, and her family was not one of recent conversion, but had for several generations professed the faith. As in heathen families was cherished the memory of ancestors who had won a triumph, or held high offices in the state, so in this, and other Christian houses, was preserved with pious reverence and affectionate pride, the remembrance of those relations who had, in the last hundred and fifty years or more, borne the palm of martyrdom, or occupied the sublimer dignities of the Church. But, though ennobled thus, and with a constant stream of blood poured forth for Christ, accompanying the waving branches of the family-tree, the stem had never been hewn down, but had survived repeated storms. This may appear surprising; but when we reflect how many a soldier goes through a whole

* Job xxix. 15.

† The place most noted in the neighborhood of Rome for whining and importunate beggars.

* The Vicus Patricius.

campaign of frequent actions, and does not receive a wound; or how many a family remains untainted through a plague, we cannot be surprised if Providence watched over the well-being of the Church, by preserving in it, through old family successions, long unbroken chains of tradition, and so enabling the faithful to say: "Unless the Lord of Hosts had left us seed, we had been as Sodom, and we should have been like to Gomorrah."^{*}

All the honors and the hopes of this family centred now in one, whose name is already known to our readers, Agnes, the only child of that ancient house. Given to her parents as they had reached the very verge of hope that their line could be continued, she had been from infancy blest with such a sweetness of disposition, such a docility and intelligence of mind, and such simplicity and innocence of character, that she had grown up the common object of love, and almost of reverence, to the entire house, from her parents down to the lowest servant. Yet nothing seemed to spoil, or warp, the compact virtuousness of her nature; but her good qualities expanded, with a well-balanced adjustment, which at the early age in which we find her, had ripened into combined grace and wisdom. She shared all her parents' virtuous thoughts, and cared as little for the world as they. She lived with them in a small portion of the mansion, which was fitted up with elegance, though not with luxury; and their establishment was adequate to all their wants. Here they received the few friends with whom they preserved familiar relations; though, as they did not entertain, nor go out, these were few. Fabiola was an occasional visitor, though Agnes preferred going to see her at her house; and she often expressed to her young friend her longing for the day, when, meeting with a suitable match, she would re-embellish and open all the splendid dwelling. For, notwithstanding the Voconian law "on the inheritance of women,"[†] now quite obsolete, Agnes had received, from collateral sources, large personal additions to the family property.

In general, of course, the heathen world, who visited, attributed appearances to avarice, and calculated what immense accumulations of wealth the miserly parents must be putting by; and concluded, that all beyond the solid screen which shut up the second court, was left to fall into decay and ruin.

It was not so, however. The inner part of the house, consisting of a large court, and the garden, with a detached dining-hall, or triclinium, turned into a church, and the upper portion of the house, accessible from those parts, were devoted to the administration of that copious charity, which the church carried on as a *business* of its life. It was under the care and direction of the deacon Reparatus, and his exorcist Secundus, officially appointed by the supreme Pontiff to take care of the sick, poor, and strangers, in one of the seven regions into which Pope Cajus, about five years before, had divided the city for this purpose; committing each region to one of the seven deacons of the Roman Church.

Rooms were set apart for lodging strangers who came from a distance, recommended by other churches; and a frugal table was provided for them. Upstairs were apartments for an hospital for the bed-ridden, the decrepit, and the sick, under the care of the deaconesses, and such of the faithful as loved to assist in this work of charity. It was here that the blind girl had her cell, though she refused to take her food, as we have seen, in the house. The *tablinum*, or muniment-room, which generally stood detached in the middle of the passage between the inner courts, served as the office and archives for transacting the business of this charitable establishment, and preserving all local documents, such as the acts of martyrs, procured or compiled by one of the seven notaries, kept for that purpose, by institution of St. Clement I., who was attached to that region,

A door of communication allowed the household to assist in these works of charity; and Agnes had been accustomed

from childhood to run in and out, many times a day, and to pass hours there; always beaming, like an angel of light, consolation, and joy on the suffering and distressed. This house, then, might be called the almonry of the region, or district, of charity and hospitality in which it was situated, and it was accessible for these purposes through the *posticum* or back-door, situated in a narrow lane little frequented. No wonder that, with such an establishment, the fortunes of the inmates should find an easy application.

We heard Pancratius request Sebastian to arrange for the distribution of his plate and jewels among the poor, without its being known to whom they belonged. He had not lost sight of the commission, and had fixed on the house of Agnes as the fittest for this purpose. On the morning which we have described, the distribution had to take place; other regions had sent their poor, accompanied by their deacons; while Sebastian, Pancratius, and other persons of higher rank had come in through the front door, to assist in the division. Some of these had been seen to enter by Corvinus.

CHAPTER XIV.

EXTREMES MEET.

A GROUP of poor coming opportunely towards the door enabled Corvinus to tack himself to them—an admirable counterfeited in all but the modesty of their deportment. He kept sufficiently close to them to hear that each of them, as he entered in, pronounced the words, "*Deo gratias*" ("Thanks be to God"). This was not merely a Christian, but a Catholic pass-word; for St. Augustine tells us that heretics ridiculed Catholics for using it, on the ground that it was not a salutation, but rather a reply; but that Catholics employed it, because consecrated by pious usage. It is yet heard in Italy on similar occasions.

Corvinus pronounced the mystic words, and was allowed to pass. Following the others closely, and copying their manners and gestures, he found himself in the inner court of the house, which was already filled with the poor and infirm. The men were ranged on one side, the women on the other. Under the portico at the end were tables piled with costly plate, and near them was another covered with brilliant jewelry. Two silver and gold smiths were weighing and valuing most conscientiously this property; and beside them was the money which they would give, to be distributed amongst the poor in just proportion.

Corvinus eyed all this with a gluttonous heart. He would have given anything to get it all, and almost thought of making a dash at something, and running out. But he saw at once the folly or madness of such a course, and resolved to wait for a share, and in the meantime take note for Fulvius of all he saw. He soon, however, became aware of the awkwardness of his present position. While the poor were all mixed up together and moving about, he remained unnoticed. But he soon saw several young men of peculiarly gentle manners, but active, and evidently in authority, dressed in the garment known to him by the name of Dalmatic, from its Dalmatian origin; that is, having over the tunic, instead of the toga, a close-fitting shorter tunic, with ample, but not over long or wide, sleeves; the dress adopted and worn by the deacons, not only at their more solemn ministrations in church, but also when engaged in the discharge of their secondary duties about the sick and poor.

These officers went on marshalling the attendants, each evidently knowing those of his own district, and conducting them to a peculiar spot within the porticoes. But as no one recognized or claimed Corvinus for one of his poor, he was at length left alone in the middle of the court. Even his dull mind could feel the anomalous situation into which he had thrust himself. Here he was, the son of the prefect of the city, whose duty it was to punish such violators of domestic rights, an intruder into the innermost parts of a nobleman's

^{*} Is. i. 9.

[†] "Ne quis hæredem virginem neque mulierem faceret," that no one should leave a virgin or a woman his heir. — *Cicero in Verrem*, i.

house, having entered by a cheat, dressed like a beggar, and associating himself with such people, of course for some sinister, or at least unlawful, purpose. He looked towards the door, meditating an escape; but he saw it guarded by an old man named Diogenes and his two stout sons, who could hardly restrain their hot blood at this insolence, though they only showed it by scowling looks and repressive biting of their lips. He saw that he was a subject of consultation among the young deacons, who cast occasional glances towards him; he imagined that even the blind were staring at him, and the decrepit ready to wield their crutches like battle-axes against him. He had only one consolation; it was evident he was not known, and he hoped to frame some excuse for getting out of the scrape.

At length the Deacon Reparatus came up to him, and, thus courteously accosted him:

"Friend, you probably do not belong to one of the regions invited here to-day. Where do you live?"

"In the region of the Alta Semita."*

The answer gave the civil, not the ecclesiastical, division of Rome; still Reparatus went on: "The Alta Semita is in my region, yet I do not remember to have seen you."

While he spoke these words, he was astonished to see the stranger turn deadly pale, and totter as if about to fall, while his eyes were fixed upon the door of communication with the dwelling-house. Reparatus looked in the same direction, and saw Pancratius, just entered, and gathering some hasty information from Secundus. Corvinus's last hope was gone. He stood the next moment confronted with the youth (who asked Reparatus to retire), much in the same position as they had last met, only that, instead of a circle around him of applauders and backers, he was hemmed in on all sides by a multitude who evidently looked with preference upon his rival. Nor could Corvinus help observing the graceful development and manly bearing, which a few weeks had given his late school-mate. He expected a volley of keen reproach, and, perhaps, such chastisement as he would himself have inflicted under similar circumstances. What was his amazement when Pancratius thus addressed him in the mildest tone:

"Corvinus, are you really reduced to distress and lamed by some accident?" Or how have you left your father's house?"

"Not quite come to that yet, I hope," replied the bully, encouraged to insolence by the gentle address, "though, no doubt, you would be heartily glad to see it."

"By no means, I assure you; I hold you no grudge. If, therefore, you require relief, tell me; and though it is not right that you should be here, I can take you into a private chamber where you can receive it unknown."

"Then I will tell you the truth: I came in here merely for a freak; and I should be glad if you could get me quietly out."

"Corvinus," said the youth, with some sternness, "this is a serious offence. What would your father say, if I desired these young men, who would instantly obey, to take you as you are, barefoot, clothed as a slave, counterfeiting a cripple, into the Forum before his tribunal, and publicly charge you with what every Roman would resent, forcing your way into the heart of a patrician's house."

"For the gods' sakes, good Pancratius, do not inflict such frightful punishment."

"You know, Corvinus, that your own father would be obliged to act towards you the part of Junius Brutus, or forfeit his office."

"I entreat you by all that you love, by all that you hold sacred, not to dishonor me and mine so cruelly. My father and his house, not I, would be crushed and ruined forever. I will go on my knees and beg your pardon for my former injuries, if you will only be merciful."

"Hold, hold, Corvinus, I have told you that was long forgotten. But hear me now. Every one but the blind around you is a witness to this outrage. There will be a hundred evidences to prove it. If ever, then, you speak of this assembly,

still more if you attempt to molest any one for it, we shall have it in our power to bring you to trial at your own father's judgment-seat. Do you understand me, Corvinus?"

"I do, indeed," replied the captive in a whining tone. "Never, as long as I live, will I breathe to mortal soul that I came into this dreadful place. I swear it by the—"

"Hush, hush! we want no such oaths here. Take my arm and walk with me." Then turning to the others, he continued: "I know this person; his coming here is quite a mistake."

The spectators, who had taken the wretch's supplicating gestures and tone for accompaniments to a tale of woe, and strong application for relief, joined in crying out, "Pancratius, you will not send him away fasting and unsuccored?"

"Leave that to me," was the reply. The self-appointed porters gave way before Pancratius, who led Corvinus, still pretending to limp, into the street, and dismissed him, saying: "Corvinus, we are now quits; only, take care of your promise."

Fulvius, as we have seen, went to try his fortune by the front door. He found it, according to Roman custom, unlocked; and, indeed, no one could have suspected the possibility of a stranger entering at such an hour. Instead of a porter, he found guarding the door only a simple-looking girl about twelve or thirteen years of age, clad in a peasant's garment. No one else was near, and he thought it an excellent opportunity to verify the strong suspicion which had crossed his mind. Accordingly, he thus addressed the little portress:

"What is your name, child, and who are you?"

"I am," she replied, "Emerentiana, the Lady Agnes's foster sister."

"Are you a Christian?" he asked her sharply.

The poor little peasant opened her eyes in the amazement of ignorance, and replied, "No, sir." It was impossible to resist the evidence of her simplicity; and Fulvius was satisfied that he was mistaken. The fact was that she was the daughter of a peasant who had been Agnes's nurse. The mother had just died, and her kind sister had sent for the orphan daughter, intending to have her instructed and baptized. She had only arrived a day or two before, and was yet totally ignorant of Christianity.

Fulvius stood embarrassed what to do next. Solitude made him feel as awkwardly situated as a crowd was making Corvinus. He thought of retreating, but this would have destroyed all his hopes; he was going to advance, when he reflected that he might commit himself unpleasantly. At this critical juncture, whom should he see coming lightly across the court but the youthful mistress of the house, all joy, all spring, all brightness and sunshine. As soon as she saw him, she stood as if to receive his errand, and he approached with his blandest smile and most courtly gesture, and thus addressed her:

"I have anticipated the usual hour at which visitors come, and I fear must appear an intruder, Lady Agnes; but I was impatient to subscribe myself as an humble client to your noble house."

"Our house," she replied, smiling, "boasts of no clients, nor do we seek them; for we have no pretensions to influence or power."

"Pardon me; with such a ruler, it possesses the highest of influences and the mightiest of powers, those which reign, without effort, over the heart as a most willing subject."

Incapable of imagining that such words could allude to herself, she replied, with artless simplicity:

"Oh, how true are your words! The Lord of this house is indeed the sovereign over the affections of all within it."

"But I," interposed Fulvius, "allude to that softer and benigner dominion, which graceful charms alone can exercise on those who from near behold them."

Agnes looked as one entranced; her eyes beheld a very different image before them from that of her wretched flatterer; and with an impassioned glance towards heaven, she exclaimed:

"Yes, He whose beauty sun and moon in their lofty firma-

*The upper part of the Quirinal, leading to the Nomentan gate, Porta Pia.

mont gaze on and admire, to Him is pledged my service and love.”*

Fulvius was confounded and perplexed. The inspired look, the rapturous attitude, the music of the thrilling tones in which she uttered these words, their mysterious import, the strangeness of the whole scene, fastened him to the spot and sealed his lips, till feeling that he was losing the most favorable opportunity he could ever expect of opening his mind (affection it could not be called) to her, he boldly said, “It is of you I am speaking; and I entreat you to believe my expression of sincerest admiration of you, and of unbounded attachment to you.” As he uttered these words, he dropt on his knee and attempted to take her hand, but the maiden bounded back with a shudder, and turned away her burning countenance.

Fulvius started in an instant to his feet; for he saw Sebastian, who was come to summon Agnes to the poor, impatient of her absence, striding forwards towards him, with an air of indignation.

“Sebastian,” said Agnes to him, as he approached, “be not angry; this gentleman has probably entered here by some unintentional mistake, and no doubt will quietly retire.” Saying this, she withdrew.

Sebastian, with his calm but energetic manner, now addressed the intruder, who quailed beneath his look, “Fulvius, what do you here? what business has brought you?”

“I suppose,” answered he, regaining courage, “that having met the lady of the house at the same place with you, her noble cousin’s table, I have a right to wait upon her, in common with other voluntary clients.”

“But not at so unreasonable an hour as this, I presume?”

“The hour that is not unreasonable for a young officer,” retorted Fulvius insolently, “is not, I trust, so for a civilian.”

Sebastian had to use all his power of self-control to check his indignation, as he replied,

“Fulvius, be not rash in what you say; but remember that two persons may be on a very different footing in a house. Yet not even the longest familiarity, still less a one dinner’s acquaintance, can authorize or justify the audacity of your bearing towards the young mistress of this house, a few moments ago.”

“Oh, you are jealous, I suppose, brave captain!” replied Fulvius, with his most refined sarcastic tone. “Report says that you are the acceptable, if not accepted, candidate for Fabiola’s hand. She is now in the country; and, no doubt, you wish to make sure for yourself of the fortune of one or the other of Rome’s richest heiresses. There is nothing like having two strings to one’s bow.”

This coarse and bitter sarcasm wounded the noble officer’s best feelings to the quick; and had he not long before disciplined himself to Christian meekness, his blood would have proved too powerful for his reason.

“It is not good for either of us, Fulvius, that you remain longer here. The courteous dismissal of the noble lady whom you have grossly insulted has not sufficed; I must be the ruder executor of her command.” Saying this, he took the unbidden guest’s arm in his powerful grasp, and conducted him to the door. When he had put him outside, still holding him fast, he added, “Go now, Fulvius, in peace; and remember that you have this day made yourself amenable to the laws of the state by this unworthy conduct. I will spare you, if you know how to keep your own counsel; but it is well that you should know, that I am acquainted with your occupation in Rome; and that I hold this morning’s insolence over your head, as a security that you follow it discreetly. Now, again I say, go in peace.”

But he had no sooner let go his grasp, than he felt himself seized from behind by an unseen, but evidently an athletic, assailant. It was Euerotas, from whom Fulvius durst conceal nothing, and to whom he had confided the intended interview with Corvinus, that had followed and watched him. From the black slave he had before learnt the mean and coarse character of this client of her magical arts; and he feared some trap.

* *Cujus pulchritudinem sol et luna mirantur, ipsi soli servo fidem.*—*Office of St. Agnes.*

When he saw the seeming struggle at the door, he ran stealthily behind Sebastian, who, he fancied, must be his pupil’s new ally, and pounced upon him with a bear’s rude assault. But he had no common rival to deal with. He attempted in vain, though now helped by Fulvius, to throw the soldier heavily down; till, despairing of success in this way, he detached from his girdle a small but deadly weapon, a steel mace of finished Syrian make, and was raising it over the back of Sebastian’s head, when he felt it wrenched in a trice from his hand, and himself twirled two or three times round, in an iron gripe, and flung flat in the middle of the street.

“I am afraid you have hurt the poor fellow, Quadratus,” said Sebastian to his centurion, who was coming up at that moment to join his fellow-Christians, and was of most Herulean make and strength.

“He well deserves it, tribune, for his cowardly assault,” replied the other, as they re-entered the house.

The two foreigners, crest-fallen, slunk away from the scene of their defeat; and as they turned the corner, caught a glimpse of Corvinus, no longer limping, but running as fast as his legs would carry him, from his discomfiture at the back-door. However often they may have met afterwards, neither ever alluded to their feats of that morning. Each knew that the other had incurred only failure and shame; and they came both to the conclusion, that there was one fold at least in Rome, which either fox or wolf would assail in vain.

CHAPTER XV.

CHARITY RETURNS.

WHEN calm had been restored, after this twofold disturbance, the work of the day went quietly on. Besides the distribution of greater alms, such as was made by St. Laurence, from the Church, it was by no means so uncommon in early ages, for fortunes to be given away at once, by those who wished to retire from the world.* Indeed we would naturally expect to find, that the noble charity of the Apostolic Church at Jerusalem would not be a barren example to that of Rome. But this extraordinary charity would be most naturally suggested at periods when the Church was threatened with persecution; and when Christians, who from position and circumstances might look forward to martyrdom, would, to use a homely phrase, clear their hearts and houses for action, by removing from both whatever could attach themselves to earth, and become the spoil of the impious soldier, instead of having been made the inheritance of the poor.†

Nor would the great principles be forgotten, of making the light of good works to shine before men, while the hand which filled the lamp, poured in its oil in the secret, which only He who seeth in secret can penetrate. The plate and jewels of a noble family publicly valued, sold, and, in their price, distributed to the poor, must have been a bright example of charity, which consoled the Church, animated the generous, shamed the avaricious, touched the heart of the catechumen, and drew blessings and prayers from the lips of the poor. And yet the individual right hand that gave them remained closely shrouded from the scrutiny or consciousness of the left; and the humility and modesty of the noble giver remained concealed in His bosom, into which these earthly treasures were laid up, to be returned with boundless and eternal usury.

And such was the case in the instance before us. When all was prepared, Dionysius the priest, who at the same time was the physician to whom the care of the sick was committed, and who had succeeded Polycarp in the title of St. Pastor, made his appearance, and seated in a chair at one end of the court, thus addressed the assembly:

“Dear brethren, our merciful God has touched the heart of

* We have it recorded of Nepetan, that on his conversion he distributed all his property to the poor. St. Paulinus of Nola did the same.

† *“Dabis impio militi quod non vis dare sacerdoti, et hoc tollit fœcus, quod non accipit Christus.”*—*St. Aug.*

some charitable brother, to have compassion on his poorer brethren, and strip himself of much worldly possession for Christ's sake. Who he is I know not; nor would I seek to know. He is some one who loves not to have his treasures where rust consumes, and thieves break in and steal, but prefers, like the blessed Laurence, that they should be borne up, by the hands of Christ's poor, into the heavenly treasury.

"Accept, then, as a gift from God, who has inspired this charity, the distribution which is about to be made, and which may be a useful help, in the days of tribulation, which are preparing for us. And as the only return which is desired from you, join all in that familiar prayer, which we daily recite for those who give, or do, us good."

During this brief address, poor Pancratius knew not which way to look. He had shrunk into a corner behind the assistants, and Sebastian had compassionately stood before him, making himself as large as possible. And his emotion did all but betray him, when the whole of that assembly knelt down, and with outstretched hands, uplifted eyes, and fervent tone, cried out, as if with one voice,

*"Retribuere dignare, Domine, omnibus nobis bona facientibus, propter Nomen tuum, vitam eternam. Amen."**

The alms were then distributed, and they proved unexpectedly large. Abundant food was also served out to all, and a cheerful banquet closed the edifying scene. It was yet early: indeed many partook not of food, as a still more delicious, and spiritual, feast was about to be prepared for them in the neighboring titular church.

When all was over, Cæcilia insisted upon seeing her poor old cripple safe home, and upon carrying for him his heavy canvas purse; and chatted so cheerfully to him, that he was surprised when he found they had reached the door of his poor but clean lodging. His blind guide then thrust his purse into his hand, and giving him a hurried good day, tripped away most lightly, and was soon lost to his sight. The bag seemed uncommonly full; so he counted carefully its contents, and found, to his amazement, that he had a double portion. He tried again, and still it was so. At the first opportunity, he made inquiries from Reparatus, but could get no explanation. If he had seen Cæcilia, when she had turned the corner, laugh outright, as if she had been playing some one a good trick, and running as lightly as if she had nothing heavy about her, he might have discovered a solution of the problem of his wealth.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE MONTH OF OCTOBER.

THE month of October in Italy is certainly a glorious season. The sun has contracted his heat, but not his splendor; he is less scorching, but not less bright. As he rises in the morning, he dashes sparks of radiance over awakening nature, as an Indian prince, upon entering his presence-chamber, flings handfuls of gems and gold into the crowd; and the mountains seem to stretch forth their rocky heads, and the woods to wave their lofty arms, in eagerness to catch his royal largesse. And after careering through a cloudless sky, when he reaches his goal, and finds his bed spread with molten gold on the western sea, and canopied above with purple clouds, edged with burnished yet airy fringes, more brilliant than Ophir supplied to the couch of Solomon, he expands himself into a huge disk of most benignant effulgence, as if to bid farewell to his past course; but soon sends back, after disappearing, radiant messengers from the world he is visiting and cheering, to remind us he will soon come back, and gladden us again. If less powerful, his ray is certainly richer and more active. It has taken months to draw out of the sapless, shrivelled vine-stem, first green leaves, then crisp slender tendrils, and last little clusters of hard sour berries; and the growth has been provokingly slow. But now the leaves are large and

manling, and worthy in vine-countries to have a name of their own;* and the separated little knots have swelled up into luxurious bunches of grapes. And of these some are already assuming their bright amber tint, while those which are to glow in rich imperial purple, are passing rapidly to it, through a changing opal hue, scarcely less beautiful.

It is pleasant then to sit in a shady spot, on a hill-side, and look ever and anon, from one's book, over the varied and varying landscape. For, as the breeze sweeps over the olives on the hill-side, and turns over their leaves, it brings out from them light and shade, for their two sides vary in sober tint; and as the sun shines, or the cloud darkens, on the vineyards, in the rounded hollows between, the brilliant web of unstirring vine-leaves displays a yellower or browner shade of its delicious green. Then, mingle with these the innumerable other colors that tinge the picture, from the dark cypress, the duller ilex, the rich chestnut, the reddening orchard, the adust stubble, the melancholy pine—to Italy what the palm-tree is to the East—towering above the box, and the arbutus, and laurels of villas, and these scattered all over the mountain, hill, and plain, with fountains leaping up, and cascades gliding down, porticoes of glittering marble, statues of bronze and stone, painted fronts of rustic dwellings, with flowers innumerable, and patches of greensward; and you have a faint idea of the attractions which, for this month, as in our days, used to draw out the Roman patrician and knight, from what Horace calls the clatter and smoke of Rome, to feast his eyes upon the calmer beauties of the country.

And so, as the happy month approached, villas were seen open to let in air; and innumerable slaves were busy, dusting and scouring, trimming the hedges into fantastic shapes, clearing the canals for the artificial brooklets, and plucking up the weeds from the gravel-walks. The *villicus* or country steward superintends all; and with sharp word, or sharper lash, makes many suffer, that perhaps one only may enjoy.

At last the dusty roads become encumbered with every species of vehicle, from the huge wain carrying furniture, and slowly drawn by oxen, to the light chariot or gig, dashing on behind spirited barbs; and as the best roads were narrow, and the drivers of other days were not more smooth-tongued than those of ours, we may imagine what confusion and noise and squabbling filled the public ways. Nor was there a favored one among these. Sabine, Tusculan, and Alban hills were all studded over with splendid villas, or humbler cottages, such as a Mæcenas or a Horace might respectively occupy; even the flat Campagna of Rome is covered with the ruins of immense country residences; while from the mouth of the Tiber, along the coast by Laurentum, Lanuvium, and Antium, and so on to Cajeta, Bajæ, and other fashionable watering-places round Vesuvius, a street of noble residences may be said to have run. Nor were these limits sufficient to satisfy the periodical fever for rustication in Rome. The borders of Benacus (now the Lago Maggiore, north of Milan), Como, and the beautiful banks of the Brenta, received their visitors not from neighboring cities only, still less from wanderers of Germanic origin, but rather from the inhabitants of the imperial capital.

It was to one of these "tender eyes of Italy," as Pliny calls its villas,† because forming its truest beauty, that Fabiola had hastened, before the rush on the road, the day after her black slave's interview with Corvinus. It was situated on the slope of the hill which descends to the bay of Gaeta; and was remarkable, like her house, for the good taste which arranged the most costly, though not luxurious, elements of comfort. From the terrace in front of the elegant villa, could be seen the calm azure bay, embowered in the richest of shores, like a mirror in an embossed and enamelled frame, relieved by the white sun-lit sails of yachts, galleys, pleasure-boats, and fishing-skiffs; from some of which rose the roaring laugh of excursionists, from others the song or harp-notes of family parties, or the loud, sharp, and not over-refined ditties of the various ploughmen of the deep. A gallery of lattice, covered

* *Pampinus pampino.*

† *Ocellis Italiae.*

* "Be pleased to render, O Lord, eternal life to all who for Thy Name's sake do unto us good things."

with creepers, led to the baths on the shore; and half way down was an opening on a favored spot of green, kept ever fresh by the gush, from an out-cropping rock, of a crystal spring, confined for a moment in a natural basin, in which it bubbled and fretted, till, rushing over its ledge, it went down murmuring and chattering, in the most good-natured way imaginable, along the side of the trellis, into the sea. Two enormous plane-trees cast their shade over this classic ground, as did Plato's and Cicero's over their choice scenes of philosophical disquisition. The most beautiful flowers and plants from distant climates had been taught to make this spot their home, sheltered, as it was, equally from sultriness and from frost.

Fabius, for reasons which will be explained later, seldom paid more than a flying visit for a couple of days to this villa; and even then it was generally on his way to some gayer resort of Roman fashion, where he had, or pretended to have, business. His daughter was, therefore, mostly alone, and enjoyed a delicious solitude. Besides a well-furnished library, always kept at the villa, chiefly containing works on agriculture or of a local interest, a stock of books, some old favorites, other lighter productions of the season (of which she generally procured an early copy at a high price), was brought every year from Rome, together with a quantity of smaller familiar works of art, such as, distributed through new apartments, make them become a home. Most of her morning hours were spent in the cherished retreat just described, with a book-casket at her side, from which she selected first one volume and then another. But any visitor calling upon her this year would have been surprised to find her almost always with a companion—and that a slave!

We may imagine how amazed she was when the day following the dinner at her house, Agnes informed her that Syra had declined leaving her service, though tempted by a bribe of liberty. Still more astonished was she at learning that the reason was attachment to herself. She could feel no pleasurable consciousness of having earned this affection by any acts of kindness, nor even by any decent gratitude for her servant's care of her in illness. She was therefore at first inclined to think Syra a fool for her pains. But it would not do in her mind. It was true she had often read or heard of instances of fidelity and devotedness in slaves, even towards oppressive masters;* but these were always accounted as exceptions to the general rule; and what were a few dozen cases, in as many centuries, of love, compared with the daily ten thousand ones of hatred around her? Yet here was a clear and palpable one at hand, and it struck her forcibly. She waited a time, and watched her maid eagerly, to see if she could discover in her conduct any airs, any symptoms of thinking she had done a grand thing, and that her mistress must feel it. Not in the least. Syra pursued all her duties with the same simple diligence, and never betrayed any signs of believing herself less a slave than before. Fabiola's heart softened more and more; and she now began to think that not quite so difficult which, in her conversation with Agnes, she had pronounced impossible—to love a slave. And she had also discovered a second evidence, that there *was* such a thing in the world as disinterested love, affection that asked for no return.

Her conversation with her slave, after the memorable one which we have recounted, had satisfied her that she had received a superior education. She was too delicate to question her on her early history, especially as masters often had young slaves highly educated to enhance their value. But she soon discovered that she read Greek and Latin authors with ease and elegance, and wrote well in both languages. By degrees she raised her position, to the great annoyance of her companions: she ordered Euphrosyne to give her a separate room, the greatest of comforts to the poor maid; and she employed her near herself as a secretary and reader. Still she could perceive no change in her conduct, no pride, no pretensions; for the moment any work presented itself of the menial character formerly allotted to her, she never seemed to think of turning

it over to any one else, but at once naturally and cheerfully set herself about it.

The reading generally pursued by Fabiola was, as has been previously observed, of rather an abstruse and refined character, consisting of philosophical literature. She was surprised, however, to find how her slave, by a simply remark, would often confute an apparently solid maxim, bring down a grand flight of virtuous declamation, or suggest a higher view of moral truth, or a more practical course of action, than authors whom she had long admired proposed in their writings. Nor was this done by any apparent shrewdness of judgment or pungency of wit; nor did it seem to come from much reading or deep thought, or superiority of education. For though she saw traces of this in Syra's words, ideas, and behaviour, yet the books and doctrines which she was reading now, were evidently new to her. But there seemed to be in her maid's mind some latent but infallible standard of truth, some master-key, which opened equally every closed deposit of moral knowledge, some well-attuned chord, which vibrated in unfailing unison with what was just and right, but jangled in dissonance with whatever was wrong, vicious or even inaccurate. What this secret was, she wanted to discover; it was more like an intuition, than anything she had before witnessed. She was not yet in a condition to learn, that the meanest and least in the Kingdom of Heaven (and what lower than a slave?) was greater in spiritual wisdom, intellectual light, and heavenly privileges, than even the Baptist Precursor.*

It was on a delicious morning in October, that, reclining by the spring, the mistress and slave were occupied in reading; when the former, wearied by the heaviness of the volume, looked for something lighter and newer; and drawing out a manuscript from her casket, said:

"Syra, put that stupid book down. Here is something, I am told, very amusing, and only just come out. It will be new to both of us."

The handmaid did as she was told, looked at the title of the proposed volume, and blushed. She glanced over the first few lines, and her fears were confirmed. She saw that it was one of those trashy works, which were freely allowed to circulate, as St. Justin complained, though grossly immoral, and making light of all virtue; while every Christian writing was suppressed, or as much as possible discountenanced. She put down the book with a calm resolution, and said:

"Do not, my good mistress, ask me to read to you from that book. It is fit neither for me to recite, nor for you to hear."

Fabiola was astonished. She had never heard, or even thought, of such a thing as restraint put upon her studies. What in our days would be looked upon as unfit for common perusal, formed part of current and fashionable literature. From Horace to Ausonius, all classical writers demonstrate this. And what rule of virtue could have made that reading seem indelicate, which only described by the pen a system of morals, which the pencil and the chisel made hourly visible to every eye? Fabiola had no higher standard of right and wrong than the system, under which she had been educated could give her.

"What possible harm can it do either of us?" she asked, smiling. "I have no doubt there are plenty of foul crimes and wicked actions described in the book; but it will not induce us to commit them. And, in the meantime, it is amusing to read them of others."

"Would you yourself, for any consideration do them?"

"Not for the world."

"Yet, as you hear them read, their image must occupy your mind; as they amuse you, your thoughts must dwell upon them with pleasure."

"Certainly. What then?"

"That image is foulness, that thought is wickedness."

"How is that possible? Does not wickedness require an action, to have any existence?"

"True, my mistress; and what is the action of the mind, or

* Such as are given by Macrobius in his *Saturnalia*, lib. i., and by Valerius Maximus.

as I call it the soul, but thought? A passion which wishes death, is the action of this invisible power, like it, unseen; the blow which inflicts it is but the mechanical action of the body, discernible like its origin. But which power commands, and which obeys? In which resides the responsibility of the final effect?"

"I understand you," said Fabiola, after a pause of some little mortification. "But one difficulty remains. There is responsibility, you maintain, for the inward, as well as the outward, act. To whom? If the second follow, there is joint responsibility for both, to society, to the laws, to principles of justice, to self; for painful results will ensue. But if only the inward action exist, to whom can there be responsibility? Who sees it? Who can presume to judge it? Who to control it?"

"God," answered Syra, with simple earnestness,

Fabiola was disappointed. She expected some new theory, some striking principle, to come out. Instead, they had sunk down into what she feared was mere superstition, though not so much as she once had deemed. "What, Syra, do you then really believe in Jupiter, and Juno, or perhaps Minerva, who is about the most respectable of the Olympian family? Do you think they have anything to do with our affairs?"

"Far indeed from it; I loathe their very names, and I detest the wickedness which their histories or fables symbolize on earth. No, I spoke not of gods and goddesses, but of one only God."

"And what do you call Him, Syra, in your system?"

"He has no name but God; and that only men have given Him, that they may speak of Him. It describes not His nature, His origin, His attributes."

"And what are these?" asked the mistress, with awakened curiosity.

"Simple as light is His nature, one and the same everywhere, indivisible, undefilable, penetrating yet diffusive, ubiquitous and unlimited. He existed before there was any beginning; He will exist after all ending has ceased. Power, wisdom, love, justice too, and unerring judgment belong to Him by His nature, and are as unlimited and unrestrained as it. He alone can create, He alone can preserve, and He alone can destroy."

Fabiola had often read of the inspired looks which animated a sibyl, or the priestess of an oracle; but she had never witnessed them till now. The slave's countenance glowed, her eyes shone with a calm brilliancy, her frame was immovable, the words flowed from her lips, as if these were but the opening of a musical reed, made vocal by another's breath. Her expression and manner forcibly reminded Fabiola of that abstracted and mysterious look, which she had so often noticed in Agnes; and though in the child it was more tender and graceful, in the maid it seemed more earnest and oracular. "How enthusiastic and excitable an Eastern temperament is, to be sure!" thought Fabiola, as she gazed upon her slave. "No wonder the East should be thought the land of poetry and inspiration." When she saw Syra relaxed from the evident tension of her mind, she said, in as light a tone as she could assume: "But, Syra, can you think, that a Being such as you have described, far beyond all the conception of ancient fable, can occupy Himself with constantly watching the actions, still more the paltry thoughts, of millions of creatures?"

"It is no occupation, lady, it is not even choice. I called Him light. Is it occupation or labor to the sun to send his rays through the crystal of this fountain, to the very pebbles in its bed? See how, of themselves they disclose, not only the beautiful, but the foul that harbors there; not only the sparkles that the falling drops strike from its rough sides; not only the pearly bubbles that merely rise, glisten for a moment, then break against the surface; not only the golden fish that bask in their light, but black and loathsome creeping things, which seek to hide and bury themselves below, and cannot; for the light pursues them. Is there toil or occupation in all this, to the sun that thus visits them? Far more would it appear so, were he to restrain his beams at the surface of the transparent element, and hold them back from throwing it

into light. And what he does here he does in the next stream, and in that which is a thousand miles off, with equal ease; nor can any imaginable increase of their number, or bulk, lead us to fancy, or believe, that rays would be wanting, or light would fail, to scrutinize them all."

"Your theories are beautiful always, Syra, and, if true, most wonderful;" observed Fabiola, after a pause, during which her eyes were fixedly contemplating the fountain, as though she were testing the truth of Syra's words.

"And they sound like the truth," she added; "for could falsehood be more beautiful than truth? But what an awful idea, that one has never been alone, has never had a wish to oneself, has never held a single thought in secret, has never hidden the most foolish fancy of a proud or childish brain, from the observation of One that knows no imperfection. Terrible thought, that one is living, if you say true, under the steady gaze of an Eye, of which the sun is but a shadow, for he enters not the soul! It is enough to make one any evening commit self-destruction, to get rid of the torturing watchfulness! Yet it sounds so true!"

Fabiola looked almost wild as she spoke these words. The pride of her pagan heart rose strong within her, and she rebelled against the supposition that she could never again feel alone with her own thoughts, or that any power should exist which could control her inmost desires; imaginings, or caprices. Still the thought came back: "Yet it seems so true!" Her generous intellect struggled against the writhing passion, like an eagle with a serpent; more with eye, than with beak and talons, subduing the quailing foe. After a struggle, visible in her countenance and gestures, a calm came over her. She seemed for the first time to feel the presence of One greater than herself, some one whom she feared, yet whom she would wish to love. She bowed down her mind, she bent her intelligence to His feet; and her heart too owned, for the first time, that it had a Master, and a Lord.

Syra, with a calm intensity of feeling, silently watched the workings of her mistress's mind. She knew how much depended on their issue, what a mighty step in her unconscious pupil's religious progress was involved in the recognition of the truth before her; and she fervently prayed for this grace.

At length Fabiola raised her head, which seemed to have been bowed down in accompaniment to her mind, and with graceful kindness said,

"Syra, I am sure I have not yet reached the depths of your knowledge; you must have much more to teach me." (A tear and a blush came to the poor handmaid's relief.) "But to-day you have opened a new world, and a new life, to my thoughts. A sphere of virtue beyond the opinions and the judgments of men, a consciousness of a controlling, an approving, and a rewarding Power too: am I right?" (Syra expressed approbation,) "standing by us when no other eye can see, or restrain, or encourage us; a feeling that, were we shut up for ever in solitude, we should be ever the same, because that influence on us must be so superior to that of any amount of human principles, in guiding us, and could not leave us; such, if I understand your theory, is the position of moral elevation, in which it would place each individual. To fall below it, even with an outwardly virtuous life, is mere deceit, and positive wickedness. Is this so?"

"O my dear mistress," exclaimed Syra, "how much better you can express all this than I!"

"You have never flattered me yet, Syra," replied Fabiola, smilingly; "do not begin now. But you have thrown a new light upon other subjects, till to-day obscure to me. Tell me, now, was it not this you meant, when you once told me, that in your view there was no distinction between mistress and slave; that is, that as the distinction is only outward, bodily and social, it is not to be put in comparison with that equality which exists before your Supreme Being, and that possible moral superiority which He might see of the one over the other, inversely of their visible rank?"

"It was in a great measure so, my noble lady; though there

are other considerations involved in the idea, which would hardly interest you at present?"

"And yet, when you stated that proposition, it seemed to me so monstrous, so absurd, that pride and anger overcame me. Do you remember that, Syra?"

"Oh, no, no!" replied the gentle servant; "do not allude to it, I pray!"

"Have you forgiven me that day, Syra?" said the mistress, with an emotion quite new to her.

The poor maid was overpowered. She rose and threw herself on her knees before her mistress, and tried to seize her hand; but she prevented her, and, for the first time in her life, Fabiola threw herself upon a slave's neck, and wept.

Her passion of tears was long and tender. Her heart was getting above her intellect; and this can only be by its increasing softness. At length she grew calm; and as she withdrew her embrace she said:

"One thing more, Syra: dare one address, by worship, this Being whom you have described to me? Is He not too great, too lofty, too distant, for this?"

"Oh, no! far from it, noble lady," answered the servant. "He is not distant from any of us; for as much as in the light of the sun, so in the very splendor of His might, His kindness, and His wisdom, we live and move and have our being. Hence, one may address Him, not as far off, but as around us and within us, while we are in Him; and He hears us not with ears, but our words drop at once into His very bosom, and the desires of our hearts pass directly into the divine abyss of His."

"But," pursued Fabiola, somewhat timidly, "is there no great act of acknowledgment, such as sacrifice is supposed to be, whereby He may be formally recognized and adored?"

Syra hesitated, for the conversation seemed to be trenching upon mysterious and sacred ground, never opened by the Church to profane foot. She, however, answered in a simple and general affirmative.

"And could not I," still more humbly asked her mistress, "be so far instructed in your school, as to be able to perform this sublimer act of homage?"

"I fear not, noble Fabiola: one must needs obtain a Victim worthy of the Deity."

"Ah, yes! to be sure," answered Fabiola. "A bull may be good enough for Jupiter, or a goat for Bacchus! but where can be found a sacrifice worthy of Him, whom you have brought me to know?"

"It must indeed be one every way worthy of Him, spotless in purity, matchless in greatness, unbounded in acceptableness."

"And what can that be, Syra?"

"Only Himself."

Fabiola shrouded her face with her hands, and then looking up earnestly into Syra's face, said to her:

"I am sure that, after having so clearly described to me the deep sense of responsibility, under which you must habitually speak as well as act, you have a real meaning in this awful saying, though I understand you not."

"As surely as every word of mine is heard, as every thought of mine is seen, it is a truth which I have spoken."

"I have not strength to carry the subject further at present; my mind has need of rest."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY.

AFTER this conversation Fabiola retired; and during the rest of the day her mind was alternately agitated and calm. When she looked steadily on the grand view of moral life which her mind had grasped, she found an unusual tranquillity in its contemplation; she felt as if she had made discovery of a great phenomenon, the knowledge of which guided her into a new and lofty region, whence she could smile on the errors and follies of mankind. But when she considered the responsibility

which this light imposed, the watchfulness which it demanded, the unseen and unrequited struggles which it required, the desolateness, almost, of a virtue without admiration or even sympathy, she again shrunk from the life that was before her, as about to be passed without any stay or help, from the only sources of it which she knew. Unconscious of the real cause she saw that she possessed not instruments or means, to carry out the beautiful theory. This seemed to stand like a brilliant lamp in the midst of a huge, bare, unfurnished hall, lighting up only a wilderness. What was the use of so much wasted splendor?

The next morning had been fixed for one of those visits which used to be annually paid to the country,—that to the now ex-prefect of the city, Chromatius. Our reader will remember, that after his conversion and resignation of office, this magistrate had retired to his villa in Campania, taking with him a number of the converts made by Sebastian, with the holy priest Polycarp, to complete their instruction. Of these circumstances, of course, Fabiola had never been informed; but she heard all sorts of curious reports about Chromatius's villa. It was said that he had a number of visitors never before seen at his house; that he gave no entertainments; that he had freed all his country slaves, but that many of them had preferred remaining with him; that if numerous, the whole establishment seemed very happy, though no boisterous sports or frolicsome meetings seemed to be indulged in. All this stimulated Fabiola's curiosity, in addition to her wish to discharge a pleasing duty of courtesy to a most kind friend of hers in childhood; and she longed to see, with her own eyes, what appeared to her to be a very Platonic, or, as we should say, Utopian, experiment.

In a light country carriage, with good horses, Fabiola started early, and dashed gaily along the level road across the "happy Campania." An autumnal shower had laid the dust, and studded with glistening gems the garlands of vine which bordered the way, festooned, instead of hedges, from tree to tree. It was not long before she reached the gentle acclivity, for hill it could scarcely be called, covered with box, arbutus, and laurels, relieved by tall tapering cypresses, amidst which shone the white walls of the large villa on the summit. A change she perceived, had taken place, which at first she could not exactly define; but when she had passed through the gate, the number of empty pedestals and niches reminded her, that the villa had entirely lost one of its most characteristic ornaments—the number of beautiful statues which stood gracefully against the clipped evergreen hedges, and gave it the name, now become quite an empty one, of *Ad Statuas*.*

Chromatius, whom she had last seen limping with gout, now a hale old man, courteously received her, and inquired kindly after her father, asking if the report were true that he was going shortly to Asia. At this Fabiola seemed grieved and mortified; for he had not mentioned his intention to her. Chromatius hoped it might be a false alarm, and asked her to take a stroll about the grounds. She found them kept with the same care as ever, full of beautiful plants; but still much missed the old statues. At last they reached a grotto with a fountain, in which formerly nymphs and sea-deities disported, but which now presented a black unbroken surface. She could contain herself no longer, and, turning to Chromatius, she said:

"Why, what on earth have you been doing, Chromatius, to send away all your statues, and destroy the peculiar feature of your handsome villa? What induced you to do this?"

"My dear young lady," answered the good-humored old gentleman, "do not be so angry. Of what use were those figures to any one?"

"If you thought so," replied she, "others might not. But tell me, what have you done with them all?"

"Why, to tell you the truth, I have had them brought under the hammer."

"What! and never let me know anything about it? You know there were several pieces I would most gladly have purchased."

* "The Villa of Statues," or "at the Statues."

Chromatius laughed outright, and said, with that familiar me, which acquaintance with Fabiola from a child authorized him always to assume with her :

"Dear me ! how your young imagination runs away, far too fast for my poor old tongue to keep pace with ; I meant not the auctioneer's hammer, but the sledge-hammer. The gods and goddesses have been all smashed, pulverized ! If you happen to want a stray leg, or a hand minus a few fingers, perhaps I may pick up such a thing for you. But I cannot promise you a face with a nose, or a skull without a fracture."

Fabiola was utterly amazed, as she exclaimed, "What an utter barbarian you have become, my wise old judge ! What shadow of reason can you give to justify so outrageous a proceeding ?"

"Why, you see, as I have grown older, I have grown wiser ! and I have come to the conclusion that Mr. Jupiter and Mrs. Juno are no more gods than you or I ; so I summarily got rid of them."

"Yes, that may be very well ; and I, though neither old nor wise, have been long of the same opinion. But why not retain them as mere works of art ?"

"Because they had been set up here, not in that capacity, but as divinities. They were here as impostors, under false pretences ; and as you would turn out of your house, for an intruder, any bust or image found among those of your ancestors, but belonging to quite another family, so did I these pretenders to a higher connection with me, when I found it false. Neither could I run a risk, of their being bought for the continuance of the same imposture."

"And pray, my most righteous old friend, is it not an imposture to continue calling your villa *Ad Statuas*, after not a single statue is left standing in it ?"

"Certainly," replied Chromatius, amused at her sharpness, "and you will see that I have planted palm-trees all about ; and, as soon as they show their heads above the evergreens, the villa will take the title of *Ad Palmas** instead."

"That will be a pretty name," said Fabiola, who little thought of the higher sense of appropriateness which it would contain. She, of course, was not aware, that the villa was now a training-school, in which many were being prepared, as wrestlers or gladiators used to be, in separate institutions, for the great combat of faith, martyrdom to death. They who had entered in, and they who would go out, might equally say they were on their way to pluck the conqueror's palm ; to be borne by them before God's judgment-seat, in token of their victory over the world. Many were the palm-branches shortly to be gathered in that early Christian retreat.

But we must here give the history of the demolition of Chromatius's statues, which forms a peculiar episode in the "Acts of Sebastian."

When Nicostratus informed him, as prefect of Rome, of the release of his prisoners, and of the recovery of Tranquillinus from gout by baptism, Chromatius, after making every inquiry into the truth of the fact, sent for Sebastian, and proposed to become a Christian, as a means of obtaining a cure of the same complaint. This of course could not be ; and another course was proposed, which would give him new and personal evidence of Christianity without risking an insincere baptism. Chromatius was celebrated for the immense number of idolatrous images which he possessed ; and was assured by Sebastian, that, if he would have them all broken in pieces, he would at once recover. This was a hard condition ; but he consented. His son Tiburtius, however, was furious, and protested that if the promised result did not follow, he would have Sebastian and Polycarp thrown into a blazing furnace ; not perhaps so difficult a matter for the prefect's son.

In one day, two hundred pagan statues were broken in pieces, including, of course, those in the villa, as well as those in the house at Rome. The images indeed were broken ; but Chromatius was not cured. Sebastian was sent for, and sharply rebuked. But he was calm and inflexible. "I am sure," he said, "that *all* have not been destroyed. Something has been

withheld from demolition." He proved right. Some small objects had been treated as works of art rather than religious things, and, like Achar's coveted spoil,* concealed. They were brought forth and broken up ; and Chromatius instantly recovered. Not only was he converted, but his son Tiburtius became also one of the most fervent of Christians ; and, dying in glorious martyrdom, gave his name to a catacomb. He had begged to stay in Rome, to encourage and assist his fellow-believers, in the coming persecution, which his connection with the palace, his great courage and activity, would enable him to do. He had become, naturally, the great friend and frequent companion of Sebastian and Pancratius.

After this little digression, we resume the conversation between Chromatius and Fabiola, who continued her last sentence, by adding,

"But do you know, Chromatius—let us sit down in this lovely spot, where I remember there was a beautiful Baccus—that all sorts of strange reports are going round the country, about your doings here ?"

"Dear me ! What are they ? Do tell me."

"Why, that you have a quantity of people living with you, whom nobody knows ; that you see no company, go out nowhere, and lead quite a philosophical sort of life, forming a most Platonic republic."

"Highly flattered !" interrupted Chromatius, with a smile and bow.

"But that is not all," continued Fabiola. "They say you keep most unfashionable hours, have no amusements, and live most abstemiously ; in fact, almost starve yourselves."

"But I hope they do us the justice to add that we pay our way ?" observed Chromatius. "They don't say, do they, that we have a long score run up at the baker's or grocer's ?"

"Oh, no !" replied Fabiola, laughing.

"How kind of them !" rejoined the good-humored old judge. "They—the whole public, I mean—seem to take a wonderful interest in our concerns. But is it not strange, my dear young lady, that so long as my villa was on the free-and-easy system, with as much loose talk, deep drinking, occasional sallies of youthful mirth, and troublesome freaks in the neighborhood, as others—I beg your pardon for alluding to such things ; but, in fact, so long as I and my friends were neither temperate nor irreproachable, nobody gave himself the least trouble about us ? But let a few people retire to live in quiet, be frugal, industrious, entirely removed from public affairs, and never even talk about politics or society, and at once there springs up a vulgar curiosity to know all about them, and a mean *peuritis* in third-rate statesmen to meddle with them ; and there must needs fly about flocks of false reports and foul suspicions about their motives and manner of living. Is not this a phenomenon ?"

"It is, indeed ; but how do you account for it ?"

"I can only do so by that faculty of little minds, which makes them always jealous of any aims higher than their own ; so that, almost unconsciously, they depreciate whatever they feel to be better than they dare aspire to."

"But what is really your object and your mode of life here, my good friend ?"

"We spend our time in the cultivation of our higher faculties. We rise frightfully early—I hardly dare tell you how early ; we then devote some hours to religious worship ; after which we occupy ourselves in a variety of ways ; some read, some write, some labor in the gardens ; and I assure you no hired workmen ever toiled harder and better than these spontaneous agriculturists. We meet at different times, and sing beautiful songs together, all breathing virtue and purity, and read most improving books, and receive oral instruction from eloquent teachers. Our meals are, indeed, very temperate ; we live entirely on vegetables ; but I have already found out that laughing is quite compatible with lentils, and that good cheer does not necessarily mean good fare."

"Why you are turned complete Pythagoreans. I thought that was quite out of date. But it must be a most economical

* "At" or "to the palace."

* Job. vii.

system," remarked Fabiola, with a knowing look.

"Ha! you cunning thing!" answered the judge; "so you really think that this may be a saving plan after all? But it won't be, for we have taken a most desperate resolution."

"And what on earth is that?" asked the young lady.

"Nothing less than this. We are determined that there shall not be such a thing as a poor person within our reach; this winter we will endeavour to clothe all the naked, and feed the hungry, and attend all the sick about. All our economy will go for this."

"It is, indeed, a very generous, though very new, idea in our times; and no doubt you will be well laughed at for your pains, and abused on all sides. They will even say worse of you than they do now, if it were possible; but it is not."

"How so?"

"Do not be offended if I tell you; but already they have gone so far as to hint that possibly you are Christians. But this, I assure you, I have everywhere indignantly contradicted."

Chromatius smiled, and said, "Why an *indignant* contradiction, my dear child?"

"Because, to be sure, I know you and Tiburtius, and Nicestratus, and that dear dumb Zoë, too well to admit, for a moment, that you had adopted the compound of stupidity and knavery called by that name."

"Let me ask you one question. Have you taken the trouble of reading any Christian writings, by which you might know what is really held and done by that despised body?"

"Oh, not I, indeed; I would not waste my time over them; I could not have patience to learn anything about them. I scorn them too much, as enemies of all intellectual progress, as doubtful citizens, as credulous to the last degree, and as sanctioning every abominable crime, ever to give myself a chance of nearer acquaintance with them."

"Well, dear Fabiola, I thought just the same about them once, but I have much altered my opinion of late."

"This is, indeed, strange; since, as prefect of the city, you must have had to punish many of these wretched people for their constant transgression of the laws."

A cloud came over the cheerful countenance of the old man, and a tear stood in his eye. He thought of St. Paul, who had once persecuted the Church of God. Fabiola saw the change, and was distressed. In the most affectionate manner, she said to him, "I have said something very thoughtless, I fear, or stirred up recollections of what must be painful to your kind heart. Forgive me, dear Chromatius, and let us talk of something else. One purpose of my visit to you was, to ask if you knew of anyone going immediately to Rome. I have heard, from several quarters of my father's projected journey, and I am anxious to write to him*, lest he repeat what he did before—go without taking leave of me, to spare me pain."

"Yes," replied Chromatius, "there is a young man starting early to-morrow morning. Come into the library, and write your letter; the bearer is probably there."

They returned to the house, and entered an apartment on the ground floor, full of book-chests. At a table in the middle of the room a young man was seated, transcribing a large volume; which, on seeing a stranger enter, he closed and put aside.

"Torquatus," said Chromatius, addressing him, "this lady desires to send a letter to her father in Rome."

"It will always give me great pleasure," replied the young man, "to serve the noble Fabiola or her illustrious father."

"What, do you know them?" asked the judge, rather surprised.

"I had the honor, when very young, as my father had had before me, to be employed by the noble Fabius in Asia. Ill-health compelled me to leave his service."

Several sheets of fine vellum, cut to a size, evidently for transcription of some book, lay on the table. One of these the

good old man placed before the lady, with ink and a reed, and she wrote a few affectionate lines to her father. She doubled the paper, tied a thread round it, attached some wax to this, and impressed her seal, which she drew from an embroidered bag, upon the wax. Anxious, some time, to reward the messenger, when she could better know how, she took another piece of the vellum, and made on it a memorandum of his name and residence, and carefully put this into her bosom. After partaking of some slight refreshment, she mounted her car, and bid Chromatius an affectionate farewell. There was something touchingly paternal in his look, as though he felt he should never see her again. So she thought; but it was a very different feeling which softened his heart. Should she always remain thus? Must he leave her to perish in obstinate ignorance? Were that generous heart, and that noble intellect, to grovel on in the slime of bitter paganism, when every feeling and every thought in them seemed formed of strong yet finest fibres, across which truth might weave the richest web? It could not be; and yet a thousand motives restrained him from an avowal, which he felt would, at present, only repulse her fatally from any nearer approach to the faith. "Farewell," my child," he exclaimed, "may you be blessed a hundredfold, in ways which as yet you know not." He turned away his face as he dropped her hand, and hastily withdrew.

Fabiola too was moved by the mystery, as well as the tenderness, of his words; but was startled, before reaching the gate, to find her chariot stopped by Torquatus. She was at that moment painfully struck by the contrast between the easy and rather familiar, though respectful, manner of the youth, and the mild gravity, mixed with cheerfulness, of the old ex-prefect.

"Pardon this interruption, madam," he said, "but are you anxious to have this letter quickly delivered?"

"Certainly, I am *most* anxious that it should reach my father as speedily as possible."

"Then I fear I shall be hardly able to serve you. I can only afford to travel on foot, or by chance and cheap conveyance, and I shall be some days on the road."

Fabiola, hesitating, said: "Would it be taking too great a liberty, if I should offer to defray the expenses of a more rapid journey?"

"By no means," answered Torquatus, rather eagerly, "if I can thereby better serve your noble house."

Fabiola handed him a purse abundantly supplied, not only for his journey, but for an ample recompense. He received it with smiling readiness, and disappeared by a side alley. There was something in his manner which made a disagreeable impression; she could not think he was fit company for her dear old friend. If Chromatius had witnessed the transaction, he would have seen a likeness to Judas, in that eager clutching of the purse. Fabiola, however, was not sorry to have discharged, by a sum of money, once for all, any obligation she might have contracted by making him her messenger. She therefore drew out memorandum to destroy it as useless, when she perceived that the other side of the vellum was written on; as the transcriber of the book, which she saw put by, had just commenced its continuation on that sheet. Only a few sentences, however, had been written, and she proceeded to read them. Then for the first time she perused the following words from a book unknown to her:

"I say to you, love your enemies; do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you: that you may be the children of your Father who is in heaven, who maketh the sun to rise on the good and the bad, and raineth upon the just and the unjust."*

We may imagine the perplexity of an Indian peasant who has picked up in a torrent's bed a white pellucid pebble, rough and dull outside, but where chipped, emitting sparks of light; unable to decide whether he has become possessed of a splendid diamond, or of a worthless stone, a thing to be placed on a royal crown, or trodden under a beggar's feet. Shall he put an end to his embarrassment by at once flinging it away, or shall

* There was no post in those days, and persons wishing to send letters had to despatch an express or find some opportunity.

he take it to a lapidary, ask its value, and perhaps be laughed at to his face? Such were the alternating feelings of Fabiola on her way home. "Whose can these sentences be? No Greek or Roman philosopher's. They are either very false or very true, either sublime morality or base degradation. Does any one practice this doctrine, or is it a splendid paradox? I will trouble myself no more on the subject. Or rather I will ask Syra about it; it sounds very like one of her beautiful, but impracticable theories. No; it is better not. She overpowers me by her sublime views, so impossible for me, though they seem easy to her. My mind wants rest. The shortest way is to get rid of the cause of my perplexity, and forget such harassing words. So here it goes to the winds, or to puzzle some one else, who may find it on the roadside. Ho! Phormio, stop the chariot, and pick up that piece of parchment which I have dropped."

The outrider obeyed, though he had thought the sheet deliberately flung out. It was replaced in Fabiola's bosom: it was like a seal upon her heart; for that heart was calm and silent till she reached home.

CHAPTER XVIII.

TEMPTATION.

VERY early next morning a mule and guide came to the door of Chromatius's villa. On it was packed a moderate pair of saddle-bags, the whole known property of Torquatus. Many friends were up to see him off, and receive from him the kiss of peace ere he departed. May it not prove like that of Gethsemani! Some whispered a kind, soft word in his ear, exhorting him to be faithful to the graces he had received; and he earnestly, and probably sincerely, promised that he would. Others, knowing his poverty, put a little present into his hand, and entreated him to avoid his old haunts and acquaintances. Polycarp, however, the director of the community, called him aside; and with fervent words, and flowing tears, conjured him to correct the irregularities, slight perhaps but threatening, which had appeared in his conduct, repress the levity which had manifested itself in his bearing, and cultivate more all Christian virtues. Torquatus, also with tears, promised obedience, knelt down, kissed the good priest's hand, and obtained his blessing; then received from him letters of recommendation for his journey, and a small sum for its moderate expenses.

At length all was ready: the last farewell was spoken, the last good wish expressed; and Torquatus, mounted on his mule, with his guide at its bridle, proceeded slowly along the straight avenue which led to the gate. Long after every one else had reëntered the house, Chromatius was standing at the door, looking wistfully, with a moist eye, after him. It was just such a look as the Prodigal's father kept fixed on his departing son.

As the villa was not on the high road, this modest quadrupedal conveyance had been hired to take him across the country to Fundi (now Fondi), as the nearest point where he could reach it. There he was to find what means he could for prosecuting his journey. Fabiola's purse, however, had set him very much at ease on that score.

The road by which he travelled was varied in its beauties. Sometimes it wound along the banks of the Liris, gay with villas and cottages. Then it plunged into a miniature ravine, in the skirts of the Apennines, walled in by rocks, matted with myrtle, aloes, and the wild vine, amidst which white gouts shone like spots of snow; while beside the path gurgled, and wriggled on, a tiny brook, that seemed to have worked itself into the bright conceit that it was a mountain torrent; so great was the bustle and noise with which it pushed on, and pretended to foam, and appeared to congratulate itself loudly on having achieved a waterfall by leaping down two stones at a time, and plunging into an abyss concealed by a wide acanthus-leaf. Then the road emerged, to enjoy a wide prospect of the vast garden of Campagna, with the blue bay of Cajeta, in the

background, speckled by the white sails of its craft, that looked at that distance like flocks of bright-plumed waterfowl, basking and fluttering on a lake.

What were the traveller's thoughts amidst these shifting scenes of a new act in his life's drama? did they amuse him? did they delight him? did they elevate him, or did they depress? His eye scarcely noted them. It had run on far beyond them, to the shady porticoes and noisy streets of the capital. The dusty garden and the artificial fountain, the marble bath and the painted vault, were more beautiful in his eyes than fresh autumn vineyards, pure streams, purple ocean, and azure sky. He did not, of course, for a moment turn his thoughts towards its foul deeds and impious practices, its luxury, its debauchery, its profaneness, its dishonesties, its calumnies, its treacheries, its uncleannesses. Oh, no! what would he, a Christian, have again to do with these? Sometimes, as his mind became abstracted, it saw, in a dark nook of a hall in the *Thermæ*, a table, round which moody but eager gamblers were casting their knuckle-bone dice; and he felt a quivering creep over him of an excitement long suppressed; but a pair of mild eyes, like Polycarp's, loomed on him from behind the table and aroused him. Then he caught himself, in fancy, seated at a maple board, with a ruby gem of *Falerian* wine, set in the rim of a golden goblet, and discourse, ungirded by inebriety, going round with the cup; when the reproving countenance of Chromatius would seem placed opposite, repelling with a scowl the approach of either.

He was, in fact, returning only to the innocent enjoyment of the imperial city, to its walks, its music, its paintings, its magnificence, its beauty. He forgot that all these were but the accessories to a living and panting mass of human beings, whose passions they enkindled, whose evil desires they inflamed, whose ambition they fanned, whose resolutions they melted, and whose minds they enervated. Poor youth! he thought he could walk through that fire, and not be scorched! Poor moth! he imagined he could fly through that flame, and have his wings unscathed!

It was in one of his abstracted moods that he journeyed through a narrow overhung defile, when suddenly he found himself at its opening, with an inlet of the sea before him, and in it one solitary and motionless skiff. The sight at once brought to his memory a story of his childhood, true or false, it mattered not; but he almost fancied its scene was before him.

Once upon a time there was a bold young fisherman living on the coast of southern Italy. One night, stormy and dark, he found that his father and brothers would not venture out in their tight and strong smack; so he determined, in spite of every remonstrance, to go alone in the little cockle-shell attached to it. It blew a gale, but he rode it out in his tiny buoyant bark, till the sun rose, warm and bright, upon a placid, glassy sea. Overcome by fatigue and heat, he fell asleep; but, after some time, was awakened by a loud shouting at a distance. He looked round, and saw the family boat, the crew of which were crying aloud and waving their hands to invite him back; but they made no effort to reach him. What could they want? what could they mean? He seized his oars, and began to pull lustily toward them; but he was soon amazed to find that the fishing-boat, toward which he had turned the prow of his skiff, appeared upon his quarter; and soon, though he righted his craft, it was on the opposite side. Evidently he had been making a circle; but the end came within its beginning, in a spiral curve; and now he was commencing another and a narrower one. A horrible suspicion flashed upon his mind: he threw off his tunic, and pulled like a madman at his oars. But though he broke the circle a bit here and a bit there, still round he went, and every time nearer to the centre, in which he could see a downward funnel of hissing and foaming water. Then, in despair, he threw down his oars, and standing, he flung up his arms frantically; and a sea-bird screaming near, heard him cry out as loud as itself, "*Charibdis!*"* And now the circle his boat went spinning round

*A whirlpool between Italy and Sicily.

was only a few times longer than itself; and he cast himself flat down, and shut his ears and eyes with his hands, and held his breath, till he felt the waters gurgling above him, and he was whirled down into the abyss.

"I wonder," Torquatus said to himself, "did any one ever perish in this way? or is it a mere allegory?—if so, of what? Can a person be drawn on gradually in this manner to spiritual destruction? are my present thoughts, by any chance, an outer circle, which has caught me, and—"

"Fundi!" exclaimed the muleteer, pointing to a town before them; and presently the mule was sliding along the broad flags of its pavement.

Torquatus looked over his letters, and drew one out for the town. He was taken to a little inn of the poorest class by his guide, who was paid handsomely, and retired swearing and grumbling at the niggardliness of the traveller. He then inquired the way to the house of Cassianus, the schoolmaster, found it, and delivered his letter. He received as kind a welcome as if he had arrived at home; joined his host in a frugal meal, during which he learned the master's history.

A native of Fundi, he had started the school in Rome, with which we became acquainted at an early period of our history, and had proved eminently successful. But finding a persecution imminent, and his Christianity discovered, he had disposed of his school, and retired to his small native town, where he was promised, after the vacation, the children of the principal inhabitants. In a fellow-Christian he saw nothing but a brother; and as such he talked freely with him of his past adventures and his future prospects. A strange idea dashed through the mind of Torquatus, that some day that information might be turned into money.

It was still early when Torquatus took his leave, and, pretending to have some business in the town, he would not allow his host to accompany him. He bought himself some more respectable apparel, went to the best inn, and ordered a couple of horses, with a postilion to accompany him; for, to fulfil Fabiola's commission, it was necessary to ride forward quick, change his horses at each relay, and travel through the night. He did so, till he reached Bovillæ, on the skirts of the Alban hills. Here he rested, changed his travelling suit, and rode on gaily between the lines of tombs, which brought him to the gates of that city, within whose walls there was more of good and more of evil contained, than in any province of the empire.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE FALL.

TORQUATUS, now elegantly attired, proceeded at once to the house of Fabius, delivered his letter, answered all inquiries, and accepted, without much pressing, an invitation to supper that evening. He then went to seek a respectable lodging, suited to the present state of his purse; and easily found one.

Fabius, we have said, did not accompany his daughter into the country, and rarely visited her there. The fact was, that he had no love for green fields or running brooks; his tastes were for the gossip and free society of Rome. During the year, his daughter's presence was a restraint upon his liberty; but when she was gone, with her establishment, into Campania, his house presented scenes and entertained persons, that he would not have presumed to bring in contact with her. Men of profligate life surrounded his table; and deep drinking till late hours, with gambling and loose conversation, generally followed his sumptuous entertainments.

Having invited Torquatus to sup with him, he went forth in search of guests to meet him. He soon picked up a batch of sycophants, who were loitering about his known haunts, in readiness for invitations. But as he was sauntering home from the baths of Titus, he saw two men in a small grove round a temple earnestly conversing together. After a moment's look, he advanced towards them; but waited, at a small distance, for

a pause in the dialogue, which was something to this effect:

"There is no doubt, then, about the news?"

"None at all. It is quite certain that the people have risen at Nicomedia and burnt down the church, as they call it, of the Christians, close to, and in sight of the palace. My father heard it from the emperor's secretary himself this morning."

"What ever possessed the fools to go and build a temple, in one of the most conspicuous places of the metropolis? They must have known that, sooner or later, the religious spirit of the nation would rise against them and destroy the eyegore, as every exhibition of a foreign religion must be to an empire."

"To be sure, as my father says, these Christians, if they had any wit in them, would hide their heads, and slink into corners, when they are so condescendingly tolerated for a time by the most humane princes. But as they do not choose to do so, but will build temples in public instead of skulking in by-lanes, as they used to do, I for one am not sorry. One may gain some notoriety, and profit too, by hunting these odious people down, and destroying them if possible."

"Well, be it so; but to come to the purpose. It is understood between us, that when we discover who are Christians among the rich, and not too powerful at first, there shall be a fair division. We will aid one another. You propose bold and rough means; I will keep my counsel as to mine. But each shall reap all the profit from those whom he discovers; and his right proportion from those who are shared between us. Is it not so?"

"Exactly."

Fabius now stepped forward, with a hearty "How are you, Fulvius? I have not seen you for an age; come and sup with me to-day, I have friends engaged; and your friend, too,—Corvinus, I believe" (the gentleman alluded to made an uncouth bow), "will accompany you, I hope."

"Thank you," replied Fulvius; "but I fear I have an engagement already."

"Nonsense, man," said the good-natured knight; "there is nobody left in the city with whom you could sup, except myself. But has my house the plague, that you have never ventured into it, since you dined there with Sebastian, and quarrelled with him? Or did you get struck by some magical charm which has driven you away?"

Fulvius turned pale, and drew away Fabius to one side, while he said: "To tell the truth, something very like it."

"I hope," answered Fabius, somewhat startled, "that the black witch has been playing no tricks with you; I wish heartily she were out of my house. But, come," he continued in good humor, "I really thought you were struck by a better charm that evening. I have my eyes open; I saw how your heart was fixed on my little cousin Agnes."

Fulvius stared at him, with some amazement; and, after a pause, replied: "And if it was so, I saw that your daughter made up her mind, that no good should ever come out of it."

"Say you so? Then that explains your constant refusal to come to me again. But Fabiola is a philosopher, and understands nothing of such matters. I wish, indeed, she would give up her books, and think of settling herself in life, instead of preventing others. But I can give you better news than that; Agnes is as much attached to you as you can be to her."

"Is it possible? How can you happen to know it?"

"Why, then, to tell you what I should have told you long since, if you had not fought so shy of me, she confided it to me that very day."

"To you?"

"Yes, to me; those jewels of yours quite won her heart. She told me as much. I knew she could only mean you. Indeed, I am sure she meant you."

Fulvius understood these words of the rich gems which he displayed; while the knight spoke of the jewels which he imagined Agnes had received. She had proved, Fulvius was thinking, an easy prize, in spite of her demureness; and here lay fortune and rank open before him, if he could only manage his game; when Fabius thus broke in upon his dream, "Come, now, you have only to press your suit boldly; and I

tell you, you will win it, whatever Fabiola may think. But you have nothing to fear from her now. She and all her servants are absent; her part of the house is closed, and we enter by the back-door to the more enjoyable part of the establishment."

"I will wait on you without fail," replied Fulvius. "And Corvinus with you," added Fabius, as he turned away.

We will not describe the banquet further than to say, that wines of rare excellence flowed so plentifully, that almost all the guests got, more or less, heated and excited. Fulvius, however, for one, kept himself cool.

The news from the East came into discussion. The destruction of the church at Nicomedia had been followed by incendiary fires in the imperial palace. Little doubt could exist that the Emperor Galerius was their author; but he charged them on the Christians; and thus goaded on the reluctant mind of Dioclesian to become their fiercest persecutor. Every one began to see that, before many months were over, the imperial edict to commence the work of destruction would reach Rome, and find in Maximian a ready executor.

The guests were generally inclined to gore the stricken deer; for generosity, in favor of those whom popular clamor hunts down, requires an amount of courage too heroic to be common.

Even the most liberal found reasons for Christians being excepted from all kind consideration. One could not bear their mysteriousness, another was vexed at their supposed progress; this man thought them opposed to the real glory of the empire, that considered them a foreign element, that ought to be eliminated from it. One thought their doctrine detestable, another their practice infamous. During all this debate, if it could be so called, where both sides came to the same conclusion, Fulvius, after having glanced from one to the other of the guests, had fixed his evil eye upon Torquatus.

The youth was silent; but his countenance, by turns, was pale and flushed. Wine had given him a rash courage, which some strong principle restrained. Now he clenched his hand, and pressed it to his breast; now he bit his lip. At one time he was crumbling the bread between his fingers; at another, he drank off, unconsciously, a cup of wine.

"These Christians hate us, and would destroy us all if they could," said one. Torquatus leaned forward, opened his lips, but remained silent.

"Destroy us, indeed! Did they not burn Rome, under Nero; and have they not just set fire to the palace in Asia, over the emperor's head?" asked a second. Torquatus rose upon his couch, stretched forth his hand, as if about to reply, but drew it back.

"But what is infinitely worse is, their maintaining such anti-social doctrines, conniving at such frightful excesses, and degrading themselves to the disgusting worship of an ass's head," proceeded a third. Torquatus now fairly writhed; and rising, had lifted his arm, when Fulvius, with a cool calculation of time and words, added, in bitter sarcasm: "Ay, and massacre a child, and devour his flesh and blood, at every assembly."*

The arm descended on the table, with a blow that made every goblet and beaker dance and ring, as, in a choked voice, Torquatus exclaimed: "It is a lie! a cursed lie!"

"How can you know that?" asked Fulvius, with his blandest tone and look.

"Because," answered the other, with great excitement, "I am myself a Christian; and ready to die for my faith!"

If the beautiful alabaster statue, with a bronze head, in the niche beside the table, had fallen forward, and been smashed on the marble pavement, it could not have caused a more fearful sensation than this sudden announcement. All were startled for a moment. Next, a long blank pause ensued, after which, each began to show his feelings in his features. Fabius looked exceedingly foolish, as if conscious that he had brought his guests into bad company. Calpurnius puffed himself out, evidently thinking himself ill-used, by having a guest brought in, who might absurdly be supposed to know more about Christians than himself. A young man opened his mouth as he

stared at Torquatus; and a testy old gentleman was evidently hesitating, whether he should not knock down somebody or other, no matter whom. Corvinus looked at the poor Christian with the sort of grin of delight, half idiotic, half savage, with which a countryman might gaze upon the vermin that he finds in his trap in a morning. Here was a man ready to hand, to put on the rack, or gridiron, whenever he pleased. But the look of Fulvius was worth them all. If ever any microscopic observer has had the opportunity of witnessing the expression of the spider's features, when, after a long fast, it sees a fly, plump with others' blood, approach its net, and keenly watches every stroke of its wing, and studies how it can beat throw the first thread round it, sure that then all that gorges it shall be its own; that we fancy would be the best image of his looks, as certainly it is of his feelings. To get hold of a Christian, ready to turn traitor, had long been his desire and study. Here, he was sure, was one, if he could only manage him. How did he know this? Because he knew sufficient of Christians to be convinced, that no genuine one would have allowed himself either to drink to excess, or to boast of his readiness to court martyrdom.

The company broke up; every body slunk away from the discovered Christian, as from one pest-stricken. He felt alone and depressed, when Fulvius, who had whispered a word to Corvinus, went up to him, and taking him by the hand said courteously: "I fear, I spoke inconsiderately, in drawing out from you a declaration which may prove dangerous."

"I fear nothing," replied Torquatus, again excited: "I will stand to my colors to the last."

"Hush, hush!" broke in Fulvius, "the slaves may betray you. Come with me to another chamber, where we can talk quietly together."

So saying, he led him into an elegant room, where Fabius had ordered goblets and flagons of the richest Falernian wine to be brought, for such as, according to Roman fashion, liked to enjoy a *commisatio*, or drinking-bout. But only Corvinus, engaged by Fulvius, followed.

On a beautifully inlaid table were dice. Fulvius, after plying Torquatus with more liquor, negligently took them up, and threw them playfully down, talking in the mean time on indifferent subjects. "Dear me!" he kept exclaiming, "what throws! It is well I am not playing with any one, or I should have been ruined. You try, Torquatus."

Gambling, as we learnt before, had been the ruin of Torquatus: for a transaction arising out of it he was in prison, when Sebastian converted him. As he took the dice into his hand, with no intention, as he thought, of playing, Fulvius watched him, as a lynx might its prey. Torquatus's eye flashed keenly, his lips quivered, his hand trembled. Fulvius at once recognized in all this, coupled with the poisoning of his hand, the knowing cast of the wrist, and the sharp eye to the value of the throw, the violence of a first temptation to resume a renounced vice.

"I fear you are not a better hand than I am at this stupid occupation," said he indifferently; "but, I dare say, Corvinus here will give you a chance, if you will stake something very low."

"It must be very low indeed,—merely for recreation; for I have renounced gambling. Once, indeed—but no matter."

"Come on," said Corvinus, whom Fulvius had pressed to his work by a look.

They began to throw for the most trifling stakes, and Torquatus generally won. Fulvius made him drink still, from time to time, and he became very talkative.

"Corvinus, Corvinus," he said at length, as if recollecting himself, "was not that the name that Cassianus mentioned?"

"Who?" asked the other, surprised.

"Yes, it was," continued Torquatus to himself,—"the bully, the big brute. Were you the person," he asked, looking up to Corvinus, "who struck that nice Christian boy Pancratius?"

Corvinus was on the point of bursting into a rage; but Fulvius checked him by a gesture, and said:

*The Heathen notion of the Blessed Eucharist.

"That Cassianus whom you mentioned is an eminent school-master ; pray, where does he live ?"

This he knew his companion wished to ascertain ; and thus he quieted him. Torquatus answered :

"He lives, let me see,—no, no ; I won't turn traitor. No ; I am ready to be burnt, or tortured, or die for my faith ; but I won't betray any one—that I won't."

"Let me take your place, Corvinus," said Fulvius, who saw Torquatus's interest in the game deepening. He put forth sufficient skill to make his antagonist more careful, and more intent. He threw down a somewhat larger stake. Torquatus, after a moment's pause of deliberation matched it. He won it. Fulvius seemed vexed. Torquatus threw back both sums. Fulvius seemed to hesitate, but put down an equivalent, and lost again. The play was now silent : each won and lost ; but Fulvius had steadily the advantage ; and he was the more collected of the two.

Once Torquatus looked up, and started. He thought he saw the good Polycarp behind his adversary's chair. He rubbed his eyes, and saw it was only Corvinus staring at him. All his skill was now put forth. Conscience had retreated ; faith was wavering ; grace had already departed. For the demon of covetousness, of rapine, of dishonesty, of recklessness, had come back, and brought with him seven spirits worse than himself, to that cleansed, but ill-guarded soul ; and as they entered in, all that was holy, all that was good, departed.

At length, worked up, by repeated losses and draughts of wine, into a phrenzy, after he had drawn frequently upon the heavy purse which Fabiola had given him, he threw the purse itself upon the table. Fulvius coolly opened it, emptied it, counted the money, and placed opposite an equal heap of gold. Each prepared himself for a final throw. The fatal bones fell ; each glanced silently upon their spots. Fulvius drew the money towards himself ; Torquatus fell upon the table, his head buried and hidden within his arms. Fulvius motioned Corvinus out of the room.

Torquatus beat the ground with his foot ; then moaned, next gnashed his teeth and growled ; then put his finger in his hair, and began to pull and tear it. A voice whispered in his ear, "Are you a Christian ?" Which of the seven spirits was it ? surely the worst.

"It is hopeless," continued the voice ; "you have disgraced your religion, and you have betrayed it, too."

"No, no," groaned the despairing wretch.

"Yes ; in your drunkenness you have told us all : quite enough to make it impossible for you ever to return to those you have betrayed."

"Begone, begone," exclaimed piteously the tortured sinner.

"They will forgive me still. God——"

"Silence ; utter not His name : you are degraded, perjured, hopelessly lost. You are a beggar ; to-morrow you must beg your bread. You are an outcast, a ruined prodigal and gamester. Who will look at you ? will your Christian friends ? And nevertheless you *are* a Christian ; you will be torn to pieces by some cruel death for it ; yet you will not be worshipped by them as one of their martyrs. You are a hypocrite, Torquatus, and nothing more."

"Who is it that is tormenting me ?" he exclaimed, and looked up. Fulvius was standing with folded arms at his side. "And if all this be true, what is it to you ? What have you to say more to me ?" he continued.

"Much more than you think. You have betrayed yourself into my power completely. I am master of your money"—(and he showed him Fabiola's purse)—"of your character, of your peace, of your life. I have only to let your fellow Chris-

tians know what you have done, what you have said, what you have been to-night, and you dare not face them. I have only to let that 'bully—that big brute,' as you called him, but who is son of the prefect of the city, loose upon you, (and no one else can now restrain him after such provocation), and to-morrow you will be standing before his father's tribunal to die for that religion which you have betrayed and disgraced. Are you ready *now*, any longer to reel and stagger as a drunken gambler, to represent your Christianity before the judgment-seat in the Forum ?"

The fallen man had not courage to follow the prodigal in repentance, as he had done in sin. Hope was dead in him ; for he had relapsed into his capital sin, and scarcely felt remorse. He remained silent till Fulvius aroused him by asking, "Well, have you made your choice ; either to go at once to the Christians with to-night on your head, or to-morrow to the court ? Which do you choose ?"

Torquatus raised his eyes to him, with a stolid look, and faintly answered, "Neither."

"Come, then, what will you do ?" asked Fulvius, mastering him with one of his falcon glances.

"What you like," said Torquatus, "only neither of those things."

Fulvius sat down beside him and said, in a soft and soothing voice, "Now, Torquatus, listen to me ; do as I tell you, and all is mended. You shall have house, and food, and apparel, ay, and money to play with, if you will only do my bidding."

"And what is that ?"

"Rise to-morrow as usual ; put on your Christian face ; go among your friends ; act as if nothing had happened ; but answer all my questions, tell me every thing."

Torquatus groaned, "A traitor at last !"

"Call it what you will ; that or death ! Ay, death by inches, I hear Corvinus pacing impatiently up and down the court. Quick ! which is it to be ?"

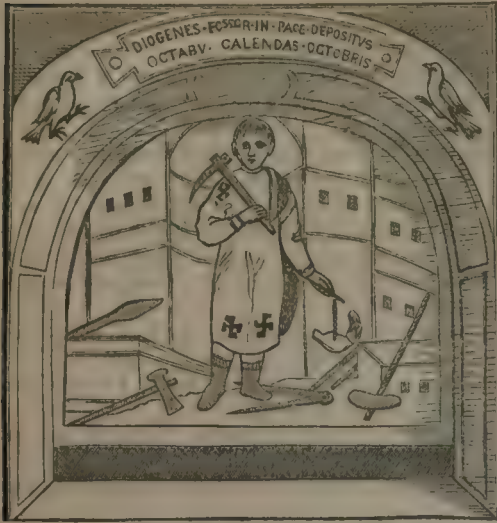
"Not death ! Oh, no ! any thing but that !"

Fulvius went out, and found his friend fuming with rage and wine ; he had hard work to pacify him. Corvinus had almost forgotten Cassianus in fresher resentments ; but all his former hatred had been rekindled, and he burnt for revenge. Fulvius promised to find out where he lived, and used this means to secure the suspension of any violent and immediate measure.

Having sent Corvinus sulky and fretting home, he returned to Torquatus, whom he wished to accompany, that he might ascertain his lodgings. As soon as he had left the room, his victim had arisen from his chair, and endeavoured, by walking up and down, to steady his senses and regain self-possession. But it was in vain ; his head was swimming from his inebriety, and his subsequent excitement. The apartment seemed to turn round and round, and float up and down ; he was sick too, and his heart was beating almost audibly. Shame, remorse, self-contempt, hatred of his destroyers and of himself, the desolateness of the outcast, and the black despair of the reprobate, rolled like dark billows through his soul, each coming in turn uppermost. Unable to sustain himself longer on his feet, he threw himself on his face upon a silken couch, and buried his burning brow in his icy hands, and groaned. And still all whirled round and round him, and a constant meaning sounded in his ears.

Fulvius found him in this state, and touched his shoulder to rouse him. Torquatus shuddered, and was convulsed ; then exclaimed : "Can this be Charybdis ?"

PART SECOND—CONFLICT.



CHAPTER I.

The scenes through which we have hitherto led our reader have been laid in one of those slippery truces, rather than peace, which often intervened between persecution and persecution. Already rumors of war have crossed our path, and its note of preparation has been distinctly heard. The roar of the lions near the Amphitheatre, which startled but dismayed not Sebastian, the reports from the East, the hints of Fulvius, and the threats of Corvinus have brought us the same news, that before long the horrors of persecution will re-appear, and Christian blood will have to flow in a fuller and nobler stream than had hitherto watered the Paradise of the New Law. The Church, ever calmly provident, cannot neglect the many signs of a threatened combat, nor the preparations necessary for meeting it. From the moment she earnestly begins to arm herself, we date the second period of our narrative. It is the commencement of conflict.

It was towards the end of October that a young man, not unknown to us, closely muffled up in his cloak, for it was dark and rather chill, might be seen threading his way through the narrow alleys of the district called the Suburra; a region, the extent and exact position of which is still under dispute, but which lay in the immediate vicinity of the Forum. As vice is unfortunately too often linked with poverty, the two found a common asylum here. Pancratius did not seem much at home in this part of the city, and made several wrong turns, till at length he found the street he was in search of. Still, without numbers on the doors, the house he wanted was an unsolved problem; although not quite insoluble. He looked for the neatest dwelling in the street; and being particularly struck with the cleanliness and good order of one beyond the rest, he boldly knocked at its door. It was opened by an old man, whose name has already appeared in our pages, Diogenes. He was tall and broad-shouldered, as if accustomed to bear burdens, which, however, had given him a stoop in his gait. His hair was a perfect silver, and hung down at the sides of a massive head; his features were strongly marked in deep melancholy lines, and though the expression of his countenance was calm, it was solemnly sad. He looked like one who had lived much among the dead, and was happiest in their company. His two sons, Majus and Severus, fine athletic youths were with him. The first was busy carving, or scratching rather, a rude epitaph on an old slab of marble, the reverse of which still bore traces of a heathen sepulchral inscription, rudely effaced by its new possessor. Pancratius looked over the work

in hand and smiled; there was hardly a word rightly spelt, or a part of speech correct; indeed, here it is:

DE BIANOBA

POLLECLA QVE ORDEV BENDET DE BIANOBA.*

The other son was making a rough design, in which could be distinguished Jonas devoured by the whale, and Lazarus raised from the dead, both most conventionally drawn with charcoal on a board; a sketch evidently for a more permanent painting elsewhere. Further, it was clear, that when the knock came to the door, old Diogenes was busy fitting a new handle to an old pick-axe. These varied occupations in one family might have surprised a modern, but they did not at all the youthful visitor; he well knew that the family belonged to the honorable and religious craft of the *Fossores*, or excavators of the Christian cemeteries. Indeed, Diogenes was the head, and director of that confraternity. In conformity with the assertion of an anonymous writer, contemporary with St. Jerome, some modern antiquarians have considered the *fossor* as forming a lesser ecclesiastical order in the primitive Church, like the *lector*, or reader. But although this opinion is untenable, it is extremely probable that the duties of this office were in the hands of persons appointed and recognized by ecclesiastical authority. The uniform system pursued in excavating, arranging and filling up of the numerous cemeteries round Rome, a system, too, so complete from the beginning, as not to leave positive signs of improvement or change as time went on, gives us reason to conclude that these wonderful and venerable works were carried on under one direction, and probably by some body associated for that purpose. It was not a cemetery or necropolis company, which made a speculation of burying the dead, but rather a pious and recognized confraternity, which was associated for the purpose.

A series of interesting inscriptions, found in the cemetery of St. Agnes, proves that this occupation was continued in particular families; grandfather, father, and sons, having carried it on in the same place.† We can thus easily understand the great skill, and uniformity of practice observable in the catacombs. But the *fossores* had evidently a higher office, or even jurisdiction, in that underground world. Though the Church provided space for the burial of all her children, it was natural that some should make some compensation for their place of sepulture, if chosen in a favorite spot, such as the vicinity of a martyr's tomb. These sextons had the management of such transactions, which are often recorded in the ancient cemeteries. The following inscription is preserved in the Capitol:

EMPTV LOCVM AB ARTEMISIVM VISOMVM HOC EST
ET PRAETIVM DATVM FOSSORI HILARO IDEST
FOL NOOD PRAESENTIA SEVERI FOSS ET LAVRENTI.

That is—

"This is the grave for two bodies, bought by Artemisius; and the price was given to the Fossor Hilarus—that is, purchased In the presence of Severus the Fossor and Lauretius."

Possibly the last named was the witness on the purchaser's side, and Severus on the seller's. However this may be, we trust we have laid before our readers all that is known about the profession, as such, of Diogenes and his sons.

We left Pancratius amused at Majus's rude attempts in glyptic art; his next step was to address him.

"Do you always execute these inscriptions yourself?"

"Oh, no," answered the artist, looking up and smiling, "I do them for poor people, who cannot afford to pay a better hand. This was a good woman who kept a shop in the *Viano-va*, and you may suppose did not become rich, especially as

* "From New Street. Pollecla who sells barley in New Street." Found in the cemetery of Callistus.

† Given by F. Marchi in his *Architecture of Subterranean Christian Rome*, 1844; a work on which we will freely draw.

‡ The number, unfortunately, is not intelligible being in cipher.

* "Diogenes, the excavator, deposited in peace eight days before the first of October.—From St. Sebastian's. Boldetti, i. 15, p. 60.

she was very honest. And yet a curious thought struck me as I was carving her epitaph."

"Let me hear it, Majus."

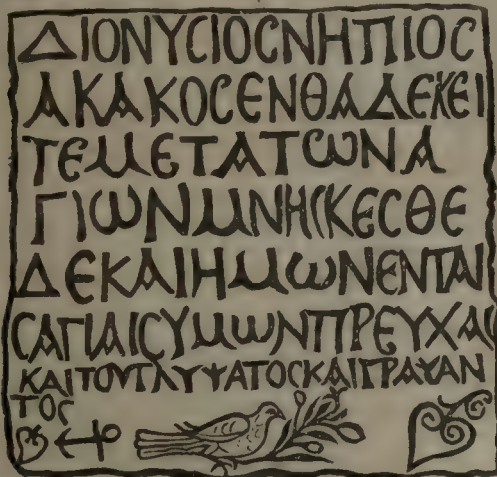
"It was, that perhaps some thousand years hence or more, Christians might read with reverence my scratches on the wall, and hear of poor old Pollecla and her barley-stall with interest, while the inscription of not a single emperor, who persecuted the Church would be read or even known."

"Well, I can hardly imagine that the superb mausoleums of sovereigns will fall to utter decay, and yet the memory of a market-wife descend to distant ages. But what is your reason for thinking thus?"

"Simply because I would sooner commit to the keeping of posterity the memory of the pious poor than that of the wicked rich. And my rude record may possibly be read when triumphal arches have been demolished. It's dreadfully written though, is it not?"

"Never mind that; its simplicity is worth much fine writing. What is that slab against the wall?"

"Ah, that is a beautiful inscription brought us to put up; you will see the writer and engraver were different people. It is to go to the cemetery at the Lady Agnes's villa, on the Nomentan way. I believe it is in memory of a most sweet child, whose death is deeply felt by its virtuous parents," Pancratius took a light to it, and read as follows:



"The innocent boy Dionysius lieth here among the saints. Remember us in your holy prayers, the writer and the engraver."

"Dear, happy child!" continued Pancratius, when he had perused the inscription; "add me, the reader, to the writer and carver of thine epitaph, in thy holy prayers."

"Amen," answered the pious family.

But Pancratius, attracted by a certain husky sound in Diogenes's voice, turned round, and saw the old man vigorously trying to cut off the end of a little wedge which he had driven into the top of the handle of his pick-axe, to keep it fast in the iron; but every moment baffled by some defect in his vision, which he removed by drawing the back of his brawny hand across his eyes. "What is the matter, my good old friend?" said the youth kindly. "Why does this epitaph of young Dionysius particularly affect you?"

"It does not of itself; but it reminds me of so much that is past, and suggests so much that may be about to come, that I feel almost faint to think of either."

"What are your painful thoughts, Diogenes?"

"Why, do you see, it is all simple enough to take into one's arms a good child like Dionysius, wrapped in his cerecloth, fragrant with spices, and lay him in his grave. His parents may weep, but his passage from sorrow to joy was easy and sweet. It is a very different thing, and requires a heart as hardened as mine by practice" (another stroke of the hand across the eyes) "to gather up hastily the torn flesh and broken limbs of such another youth, to wrap them hurriedly in their winding sheet, then fold them into another sheet full of lime, instead of balsams and shroud them precipitately into their

tomb.* How differently one would wish to treat a martyr's body!"

"True, Diogenes; but a brave officer prefers the plain soldier's grave, on the field of battle, to the carved sarcophagus on the Via Appia. But are such scenes as you describe common in times of persecution?"

"By no means uncommon, my good young master. I am sure a pious youth like you must have visited, on his anniversary, the tomb of Restitutus in the cemetery of Hermes."

"Indeed I have, and often have I been almost jealous of his early martyrdom. Did you bury him?"

"Yes; and his parents had a beautiful tomb made, the *arcosolium* of his crypt.† My father and I made it of six slabs of marble, hastily collected, and I engraved the inscription now beside it. I think I carved better than Majus there," added the old man, now quite cheerful.

"That is not saying much for yourself, father," rejoined his son no less smiling; "but here is the copy of the inscription which you wrote," he added, drawing out a parchment from a number of sheets.

"I remember it perfectly," said Pancratius, glancing over it, and reading it as follows, correcting the errors in orthography, but not those in grammar, as he read:

AELIO FABIO RESTVTO
FILIO PISSIMO PARI N
TES FECERVNT QVIVI
XIT ANNI. S XVIII MENS
VII INIRENE.

"To Ælius Fabius Restitutus, their most pious son, his parents erected (this tomb), Who lived eighteen years and seven months. In peace."

He continued: "What a glorious youth, to have confessed Christ at such an age."

"No doubt," replied the old man; "But I dare say you have always thought that his body reposes alone in his sepulchre. Anyone would think so from the inscription."

"Certainly, I have always thought it so. Is it otherwise?"

"Yes, noble Pancratius, he has a comrade younger than himself lying in the same bed. As we were closing the tomb of Restitutus, the body of a boy not more than twelve or thirteen years old was brought to us. Oh, I shall never forget the sight! He had been hung over a fire, and his head, trunk, and limbs nearly to the knees, were burnt to the very bone; and so disfigured was he, that no feature could be recognized. Poor little fellow, what he must have suffered! But why should I pity him? Well, we were pressed for time; and we thought the youth of eighteen would not grudge room for his fellow-soldier of twelve, but would own him for a younger brother; so we laid him at Ælius Fabius's feet. But we had no second phial of blood to put outside, that a second martyr might be known to lie there; for the fire had dried his blood up in his veins."†

"What a noble boy! If the first was older, the second was younger than I. What say you, Diogenes, don't you think it likely you may have to perform the same office for me one of these days?"

"Oh, no, I hope not," said the old digger, with a return of his husky voice. "Do not, I entreat you, allude to such a possibility. Surely my own time must come sooner. How the old trees are spared, indeed, and the young plants cut down."

* In the cemetery of St. Agnes, pieces of lime have been found in tombs forming exact moulds of different parts of the body, with the impression of a finer linen inside, and a coarser outside. As to spices and balsams, Tertullian observes that "the Arabs and Sabæans well know that the Christians annually consume more for their dead than the heathen world did for its gods."

† These terms will be explained later.

‡ On the 22nd of April, 1823, this tomb was discovered unviolated. On being opened, the bones, white, bright, and polished as ivory were found, corresponding to the framework of a youth of eighteen. At his head was the phial of blood. With his head to his feet was the skeleton of a boy, of twelve or thirteen, black and charred chiefly at the head and upper parts, down to the middle of the thigh-bones, from which to the feet the bones gradually whitened. The two bodies, richly clothed, repose side by side under the altar of the Jesuits' college

"Come, come, my good friend, I won't afflict you. But I have almost forgotten to deliver the message I came to bring. It is, that to-morrow at dawn, you must come to my mother's house, to arrange about preparing the cemeteries, for our coming trouble. Our holy Pope will be there, with the priests of the titles, the regionary deacons, the notaries, whose number has been filled up, and you, the head *fossor*, that all may act in concert."

"I will not fail, Pancratius," replied Diogenes.

"And now," added the youth, "I have a favor to ask you."

"A favor from me?" asked the old man surprised.

"Yes; you will have to begin your work immediately, I suppose. Now, often as I have visited, for devotion, our sacred cemeteries, I have never studied or examined them: and this I should like to do with you, who know them so well."

"Nothing would give me greater pleasure," answered Diogenes, somewhat flattered by the compliment, but still more pleased by this love for what he so much loved. "After I have received my instructions, I shall go at once to the cemetery of Callistus. Meet me out of the Porta Capena, half an hour before mid-day, and we will go together."

"But I shall not be alone," continued Pancratius. "Two youths, recently baptized, desire much to become acquainted with our cemeteries, which they do not yet much know; and have asked me to initiate them there."

"Any friends of yours will be always welcome. What are their names, that we may make no mistake?"

"One is Tiburtius, the son of Chromatius, the late prefect; the other is a young man named Torquatus."

Severus started a little, and said: "Are you quite sure about him, Pancratius?"

Diogenes rebuked him, saying, "That he comes to us in Pancratius's company is security enough."

"I own," interposed the youth, "that I do not know as much about him as about Tiburtius, who is really a gallant, noble fellow. Torquatus is, however, very anxious to obtain all information about our affairs, and seems in earnest. What makes you fear, Severus?"

"Only a trifle, indeed. But as I was going early to the cemetery this morning, I turned into the Baths of Antoninus."

"What!" interrupted Pancratius, laughing, "do you frequent such fashionable resorts?"

"Not exactly," replied the honest artist; "but you are not perhaps aware that Cucumio the *capsarius* and his wife are Christians?"

"Is it possible? where shall we find them next?"

"Well, so it is; and moreover they are making a tomb for themselves in the cemetery of Callistus: and I had to show them Majus's inscription for it."

"Here it is," said the latter, exhibiting it, as follows:

CVCVMIO ET VICTORIA
SE VIVOS FECERVNT
CAPSARARIVS DE ANTONINIANAS.†

"Capital!" exclaimed Pancratius, amused at the blunders in the epitaph; "but we are forgetting Torquatus."

"As I entered the building, then," said Severus, "I was not a little surprised to find in one corner, at that early hour this Torquatus in close conversation with the present prefect's son, Corvinus, the pretended cripple, who thrust himself into Agnes's house, you remember, when some charitable unknown person (God bless him!) gave large alms to the poor there. Not good company I thought, and at such an hour for a Christian."

"True, Severus," returned Pancratius, blushing deeply; "but he is young as yet in the faith, and probably his old

friends do not know of his change. We will hope for the best."

The two young men offered to accompany Pancratius, who rose to leave, and see him safe through the poor and profligate neighborhood. He accepted the courtesy with pleasure, and bade the old excavator a hearty good night.

CHAPTER II.

M. ANTONI
VS. RESTVTV
S. FECIT. YPO
GEVSIBI. ET
SVIS. FIDENTI
BVS. IN. DOMINO

It seems to us as though we had neglected one, whose character and thoughts opened this little history, the pious Lucina. Her virtues were indeed of that quiet, unobtrusive nature, which affords little scope for appearing on a public scene, or taking part in general affairs. Her house, besides being, or rather containing, a title or parochial church, was now honored by being the residence of the supreme Pontiff. The approach of a violent persecution, in which the rulers of Christ's spiritual kingdom were sure to be the first sought out, as the enemies of Cæsar, rendered it necessary to transfer the residence of the Ruler of the Church, from his ordinary dwelling, to a securer asylum. For this purpose Lucina's house was chosen; and it continued to be so occupied, to her great delight, in that and the following pontificate, when the wild beasts were ordered to be transferred to it, that Pope Marcellus might feed them at home. This loathsome punishment soon caused his death.

Lucina admitted, at forty,† into the order of deaconesses, found plenty of occupation in the duties of her office. The charge and supervision of the women in the church, the care of the sick and poor of her own sex, the making, and keeping in order of sacred vestments and linen for the altar, and the instruction of children and female converts preparing for baptism, as well as the attending them at that sacred rite, belonged to the deaconesses, and gave sufficient occupation in addition to domestic offices. In the exercise of both these classes of duties, Lucina quietly passed her life. Its main object seemed to be attained. Her son had offered himself to God; and lived ready to shed his blood for the faith. To watch over him, and pray for him, were her delight, rather than an additional employment.

Early in the morning of the appointed day, the meeting mentioned in our last chapter took place. It will be sufficient to say, that in its full instructions were given for increasing the collection of alms, to be employed in enlarging the cemeteries and burying the dead, in succoring those driven to concealment by persecution, in nourishing prisoners, and obtaining access to them, and finally in ransoming or rescuing the bodies of martyrs. A notary was named for each region, to collect their acts and record interesting events. The cardinals, or titular priests, received instructions about the administration of sacraments, particularly of the Holy Eucharist, during the persecution; and to each was intrusted one cemetery or more, in whose subterranean church he was to perform the sacred mysteries. The holy Pontiff chose for himself that of Callistus, which made Diogenes, its chief sexton, not a little, but innocently, proud.

The good old excavator seemed rather more cheery than

* Better known as Caracalla's.

† The person who had charge of the bathers' clothes, from *capsa*, chest.

‡ Cucumio and Victoria made (the tomb) for themselves while living. *Capsarius* of the Antonine (baths). Found in the cemetery of Callistus, first published by F. Marchi, who attributes it, erroneously, to the cemetery of Prætextatus.

* Marcus Antonius Restitutius made this subterranean for himself and his family, that trust in the Lord." Lately found in the cemetery of SS. Nereus and Achilleus. It is singular that in the inscription of the martyr Restitutius, given in the last chapter, as in this, a syllable should be omitted in the name, one easily alured in pronouncing it.

† Sixty was the full age, but admission was given sometimes at forty.

otherwise, under the exciting forebodings of a coming persecution. No commanding officer of engineers could have given his orders more briskly, or more decidedly, for the defence of a fortified city committed to his skill to guard, than he issued his to the subordinate superintendents of the various cemeteries round Rome, who met him by appointment at his own house, to learn the instructions of the superior assembly. The shadow of the sun-dial at the Porta Capena was pointing to mid-day, as he issued from it with his sons, and found already waiting the three young men. They walked in parties of two along the Appian road; and at nearly two miles from the gate,* they entered by various ways (slipping round different tombs that lined the road) into the same villa on the right hand. Here they found all the requisites for a descent into the subterranean cemeteries, such as candles, lanterns, and the instruments for procuring light. Severus proposed that, as the guides and the strangers were in equal number, they should be divided into pairs; and in the division he allotted Torquatus to himself. What his reason was we may easily conjecture.

It would probably weary our readers to follow the whole conversation of the party. Diogenes not only answered all questions put to him, but, from time to time, gave intelligent little lectures, on such objects as he considered peculiarly attractive. But we believe we shall better interest and inform our friends, if we digest the whole matter of these into a more connected narrative. And besides, they will wish to know something of the subsequent history of those wonderful excavations, into which we have conducted our youthful pilgrims.

The history of the early Christian cemeteries, the *Catacombs*, as they are commonly called, may be divided into three portions: from their beginning to the period of our narrative, or a few years later; from this term to the eight century; then down to our own time, when we have reason to hope that a new epoch is being commenced.

We have generally avoided using the name of catacombs, because it might mislead our readers into an idea that this was either the original or a generic name of those early Christian crypts. It is not so, however: Rome might be said to be surrounded by a circumvallation of cemeteries, sixty or thereabouts in number, each of which was generally known by the name of some saint or saints whose bodies reposed there. Thus we have the cemeteries of SS. Nereus and Achilleus, of St. Agnes, of St. Pancratius, of Prætextatus, Priscilla, Hermes, &c. Sometimes these cemeteries were known by the names of the places where they existed.† The cemetery of St. Sebastian, which was called sometimes *Cæmeterium ad Sanctum Cæciliam*,‡ and by other names, had among them that of *Ad Catacumbas*,§ The meaning of this word is completely unknown; though it may be attributed to the circumstance of the relics of SS. Peter and Paul having been for a time buried there, in a crypt still existing near the cemetery. This term became the name of that particular cemetery, then was generalized, till we familiarly call the whole system of these underground excavations—the *Catacombs*.

Their origin was, in the last century, a subject of controversy. Following two or three vague and equivocal passages, some learned writers pronounced the catacombs to have been originally heathen excavations, made to extract sand, for the building of the city. These sand-pits were called *arenaria*, and so occasionally are the Christian cemeteries. But a more scientific and minute examination, particularly made by the accurate F. Marchi, has completely confuted this theory. The entrance to the catacombs was often, as can yet be seen, from these sand-pits, which are themselves underground, and no doubt were a convenient cover for the cemetery; but several circumstances prove that they were never used for Christian burial, nor converted into Christian cemeteries.

The man who wishes to get the sand out of the ground will keep his excavation as near as may be to the surface; will have it of easiest possible access, for drawing out materials; and will make it as ample as is consistent with the safety of the roof, and the supply of what he is seeking. And all this we find in the *arenaria* still abounding around Rome. But the catacombs are constructed on principles exactly contrary to all these.

The catacomb dives at once, generally by a steep flight of steps, below the stratum of loose and friable sand,* into that where it is indurated to the hardness of a tender, but consistent rock; on the surface of which every stroke of the pick-axe is yet distinctly traceable. When you have reached this depth you are in the first story of the cemetery, for you descend again by stairs, to the second and third below, all constructed on the same principle.

A catacomb may be divided into three parts, its passages or streets, its chambers or squares, and its churches. The passages are long, narrow galleries, cut with tolerable regularity, so that the roof and floor are at right angles with the sides, often so narrow as scarcely to allow two persons to go abreast. They sometimes run quite straight to a great length; but they are crossed by others, and these again by others, so as to form a complete labyrinth, or net-work, of subterranean corridors. To be lost among them would easily be fatal.

But these passages are not constructed, as the name would imply, merely to lead to something else. They are themselves the catacomb or cemetery. Their walls, as well as the sides of the staircases, are honeycombed with graves, that is, with rows of excavations, large and small, of sufficient length to admit a human body, from a child to a full-grown man, laid with its side to the gallery. Sometimes there are as many as fourteen, sometimes as few as three or four, of these rows, one above the other. They are evidently so made to measure, that it is probable the body was lying by the side of the grave, while this was being dug.

When the corpse, wrapped up, as we heard from Diogenes, was laid in its narrow cell, the front was hermetically closed either by a marble slab or more frequently by several broad tiles, put edgewise in a groove or mortice, cut for them in the rock, and cemented all round. The inscription was cut upon the marble, or scratched in the wet mortar. Thousands of the former sort have been collected, and may be seen in museums and churches; many of the latter have been copied and published; but by far the greater number of tombs are anonymous, and have no record upon them. And now the reader may reasonably ask through what period does the interment in the catacombs range, and how are its limits determined. We will try to content him, as briefly as possible.

There is no evidence of the Christians having ever buried anywhere anteriorly to the construction of catacombs. Two principles as old as Christianity regulate this mode of burial. The first is, the manner of Christ's entombment. He was laid in a grave in a cavern, wrapped up in linen, embalmed with spices; and a stone, sealed up, closed His sepulchre. As St. Paul so often proposes Him for the model of our resurrection, and speaks of our being buried with Him in baptism, it was natural for His disciples to wish to be buried after His example, so to be ready to rise with Him.

This lying in wait for resurrection was the second thought that guided the formation of these cemeteries. Every expression connected with them alluded to the rising again. The word to *bury* is unknown in Christian inscriptions. "*Deposited in peace*," "*the deposition of —*," are the expressions used; that is, the dead are but left there for a time, till called for again, as a pledge, or precious thing, intrusted to faithful, but temporary, keeping. The very name of cemetery suggests that it is only a place where many lie, as in a dormitory, slumbering for a while, till dawn come, and the trumpet's sound awake them. Hence the grave is only called "*the place*," or more technically, "*the small home*," of the dead in Christ.

* Now St. Sebastian's. The older *Porta Capena* was nearly a mile within the present.

† As *Ad Nymphas*, *Ad Ursam pilatum*, *inter duas lauros*, *Ad Sextum Philippi*, &c.

‡ The cemetery at St. Cecilia's tomb.

§ Formed apparently of a Greek preposition and a Latin verb.

* That is, the red volcanic sand called *puzzoiana*, so much prized for making Roman cement. † *Locus, loculus*.

These two ideas, which are combined in the planning of the catacombs, were not later insertions into the Christian system, but must have been more vivid in its earlier times. They inspired abhorrence of the pagan custom of burning the dead; nor have we a hint that this mode was, at any time, adopted by Christians.

But ample proof is to be found in the catacombs themselves of their early origin. The style of paintings, yet remaining, belongs to a period of still flourishing art. Their symbols, and the symbolical taste itself, are characteristic of a very ancient period. For this peculiar taste declined as time went on. Although inscriptions with dates are rare, yet out of ten thousand collected, and about to be published, by the learned and sagacious Cavalier De Rossi, about three hundred are found bearing consular dates, through every period, from the early emperors to the middle of the fourth century (A.D. 350). Another curious and interesting custom furnishes us with dates on tombs. At the closing of the grave, the relations or friends, to mark it, would press into its wet plaster, and leave there, a coin, a cameo, or engraved gem, sometimes even a shell or pebble; probably that they might find the sepulchre again, especially where no inscription was left. Many of these objects continue to be found; many have been long collected. But it is not uncommon, where the coin, or, to speak scientifically, the medal, has fallen from its place, to find a mould of it left, distinct and clear in the cement, which equally gives its date. This is sometimes of Domitian, or other early emperors.

It may be asked, wherefore this anxiety to rediscover with certainty the tomb? Besides motives of natural piety, there is one constantly recorded on sepulchral inscriptions. In England, if want of space prevented the full date of a person's death being given, we should prefer chronicling the year to the day of the month when it occurred. It is more historical. No one cares about remembering the day on which a person died without the year; but the year without the day is an important recollection. Yet while so few ancient Christian inscriptions supply the year of people's deaths, thousands give us the very day of it, on which they died, whether in the hopefulness of believers or in the assurance of martyrs. This is easily explained. Of both classes, annual commemoration had to be made on the very day of their departure; and accurate knowledge of this was necessary. Therefore it alone was recorded.

In a cemetery close to the one in which we have left our three youths, with Diogenes and his sons*, were lately found inscriptions mingled together, belonging to both orders of the dead. One in Greek, after mentioning the "Deposition of Agenda on the 13th day before the Calends, or 1st of June," adds this simple address:

ΖΗΤΑΙ ΕΝΚΩ ΚΑΙ
ΕΡΩΤΑ ΥΠΕΡ ΗΜΩΝ

"Live in the Lord, and pray for us."

Another fragment is as follows:

.... N. IVN—
..... IVIBAS—
IN PACE ET PETE
PRO NOBIS

"... Nones of June . . . Live in peace, and pray for us."

This is a third:

VICTORIA · REFRIGERER [ET]
ISSPIRITVS · TVS IN BONO

"Victoria, be refreshed, and may thy spirit be in enjoyment."
(good).

This last reminds us of a most peculiar inscription found scratched in the mortar beside a grave in the cemetery of Prætextatus, not many yards from that of Callistus. It is remarkable, first, for being in Latin, written with Greek letters; then, for containing a testimony of the divinity of our Lord;

lastly, for expressing a prayer for the refreshment of the departed. We fill up the portions of the words wanting, from the falling out of part of the plaster.

BENE MEMENTI	SORORI BON
VIII KAL NOB	
ΔΕ	CTTI
ΟΥC	PIT
XPTC	TOY
TOTC	PEΦ
ONN	ΙΓΕΡΕ
ΙΤΟ	IN
ΤΕC	

"To the well-deserving sister Bon . . . The eighth day before the calends of Nov. Christ God Almighty refresh thy spirit in Christ."

In spite of this digression on prayers inscribed over tombs, the reader will not, we trust, have forgotten that we were establishing the fact that the Christian cemeteries of Rome owe their origin to the earliest ages. We have now to state down to what period they were used. After peace was restored to the Church, the devotion of the Christians prompted them to desire burials near the martyrs, and holy people of an earlier age. But, generally speaking, they were satisfied to lie under the pavement. Hence, the sepulchral stones which are often found in the rubbish of the catacombs, and sometimes in their places, bearing consular dates of the fourth century, are thicker, larger, better carved, and in a less simple style than those of an earlier period, placed upon the walls. But before the end of that century, these monuments become rarer; and interment in the catacombs ceased in the following, at latest. Pope Damasus, who died in 384, reverently shrunk, as he tells us in his own epitaph, from intruding into the company of the saints.

Restitutus, therefore, whose sepulchral tablet we gave for a title to our chapter, may well be considered as speaking in the name of the early Christians, and claiming as their own exclusive work and property, the thousand miles of subterranean city, with their six millions of slumbering inhabitants, who trust in the Lord, and await His resurrection.*

CHAPTER III.

WHAT DIOGENES COULD NOT TELL ABOUT THE CATACOMBS.

DIOGENES lived during the first period in the history of the cemeteries, though near its close. Could he have looked into their future fate, he would have seen, near at hand, an epoch that would have gladdened his heart, to be followed by one that would have deeply afflicted him. Although, therefore, the matter of this chapter have no direct bearing upon our narrative, it will serve essentially to connect it with the present topography of its scene.

When peace and liberty were restored to the Church, these cemeteries became places of devotion, and of great resort. Each of them was associated with the name of one, or the names of several, of the more eminent martyrs buried in it; and, on their anniversaries, crowds of citizens and of pilgrims thronged to their tombs, where the Divine mysteries were offered up, and the homily delivered in their praise. Hence began to be compiled the first martyrologies, or calendars of martyrs' days, which told the faithful whither to go. "At Rome, on the Salarian, or the Appian, or the Ardeatine way," such are the indications almost daily read in the Roman mar-

* So F. Marchi calculates them, after diligent examination. We may mention here that, in the construction of these cemeteries, the sand extracted from one gallery was removed into another already excavated. Hence many are now found completely filled up.

* That of SS. Nereus and Achilleus.

tyrology, now swelled out, by the additions of later ages.*

An ordinary reader of the book hardly knows the importance of these indications; for they have served to verify several otherwise dubious cemeteries. Another class of valuable writers also comes to our aid; but before mentioning them we will glance at the changes which this devotion produced in the cemeteries. First, commodious entrances, with easy staircases, were made; then walls were built to support the crumbling galleries; and, from time to time, funnel-shaped apertures in the vaults were opened to admit light and air. Finally, basilicas or churches were erected over their entrances, generally leading immediately to the principal tomb, then called the *confession* of the church. The pilgrim thus, on arriving at the holy city, visited each of these churches, a custom yet practised; descended below, and without having to grope his way about, went direct, by well-constructed passages, to the principal martyr's shrine, and so on to others, perhaps equally objects of reverence and devotion.

During this period, no tomb was allowed to be opened, no body to be extracted. Through apertures made into the grave, handkerchiefs or scarfs, called *brandea*, were introduced, to touch the martyr's relics; and these were carried to distant countries, to be held in equal reverence. No wonder that St. Ambrose, St. Gaudensius, and other bishops, should have found it so difficult to obtain bodies, or large relics of martyrs for their churches. Another sort of relics consisted of what was called familiarly the oil of a martyr, that is, the oil, often mixed with a balsam, which burned in a lamp beside his tomb. Often a round stone pillar, three feet or so in height, and scooped out at the top, stands beside a monument; probably to hold the lamp, or serve for the distribution of its contents. St. Gregory the Great wrote to Queen Theodelinda, that he sent her a collection of the oils of the popes who were martyrs. The list which accompanied them was copied by Mabillon in the treasury of Monza, and republished by Ruinart.† It exists there yet, together with the very phials containing them, sealed up in metal tubes.

This jealousy of disturbing the saints, is displayed most beautifully in an incident, related by St. Gregory of Tours. Among the martyrs most honored in the ancient Roman Church were St. Chrysanthus and Daria. Their tombs became so celebrated for cures, that their fellow-Christians built (that is excavated) over them a chamber, with a vault of beautiful workmanship, where crowds of worshippers assembled. This was discovered by the heathens, and the emperor closed them in, walled up the entrance, and from above, probably through the *luminare*, or ventilating shaft, showered down earth and stones, and buried the congregation alive, as the two holy martyrs had been before them. The place was unknown at the peace of the Church, till discovered by Divine manifestation. But instead of being permitted to enter again into this hallowed spot, pilgrims were merely allowed to look at it, through a window opened in the wall, so as to see not only, the tombs of the martyrs, but also the bodies of those who had been buried alive at their shrines. And as the cruel massacre had taken place while preparations were being made for oblation of the holy Eucharist, there were still to be seen lying about, the silver cruets in which the wine was brought for that spotless sacrifice.‡

* One or two entries from the old *Kalendarium Romanum* will illustrate this.

iii. Non. Mart. Lucii in Callisti.

vi. Id. Dec. Eutichiani in Callisti.

xiii. Kal. Feb. Fabiani in Callisti, et Sebastiani ad Catacumbas.

viii. Id. Aug. Syati in Callisti."

We have extracted these entries of depositions in the cemetery of Callistus because, while actually writing this chapter, we have received news of the discovery of the tombs and lapidary inscriptions of every one of these Popes, together with those of St. Antherus, in one chapel of the newly-ascertained cemetery of Callistus, with an inscription in verse by St. Damasus:

"Frid. Kat. Jan. Sylvestri in Priscilla.

iv. Id. (Aug.) Laurentii in Tiburtina.

iii. Kal. Dec. Saturnini in Thrasonis."

Published by Ruinart, — *Acta*, tom. iii.

† *Acta Martyr.* tom. iii.

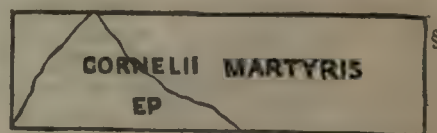
‡ S. Greg. Turon. de Gloria Mart. lib. i. c. 28. ap. Marchi, p. 81. One would apply St. Damasus's epigram on these martyrs to this occurrence, *Carm.* xxviii.

It is clear that pilgrims resorting to Rome would want a handbook to the cemeteries that they might know what they had to visit. It is likewise but natural that, on their return home, they may have sought to edify their less fortunate neighbors by giving an account of what they had seen. Accordingly there exist, no less fortunately for us than for their untravelled neighbors, several records of this character. The first place, among these, is held by catalogues compiled in the fourth century; one, of the places of sepulture of Roman Pontiffs, the other of martyrs.* After these comes three distinct guides to the catacombs; the more interesting because they take different rounds, yet agree marvellously in their account.

To show the value of these documents, and describe the changes which took place in the catacombs during the second period of their history, we will give a brief account of one discovery, in the cemetery where we have left our little party. Among the rubbish near the entrance of a catacomb, the name of which was yet doubtful, and which had been taken for that of Prætextatus, was found a fragment of a slab of marble which had been broken across obliquely, from left to right, with the following letters:



The young Cavalier de Rossi at once declared that this was part of the sepulchral inscription of the holy Pope Cornelius; that probably his tomb would be found below, in a distinguished form; and that as the itineraries above mentioned concurred in placing it in the cemetery of Callistus, this, and not the one at St. Sebastian's, a few hundred yards off, must claim the honor of that name. He went further, and foretold that as these works pronounced St. Cyprian to be buried near Cornelius, there would be found something at the tomb which would account for that idea; for it was known that his body rested in Africa. It was not long before every prediction was verified. The great staircase discovered‡ was found to lead at once to a wider space, carefully secured by brick-work of the time of peace, and provided with light and air from above. On the left was a tomb, out like others in the rock, without any exterior arch over it. It was, however, large and ample; and except one, very high above it, there were no other graves below, or over, or at the sides. The remaining portion of the slab was found within it; the first piece was brought from the Kircherian Museum, where it had been deposited, and exactly fitted to it; and both covered the tomb, thus:



Below, reaching from the lower edge of this stone to the ground was a marble slab covered with an inscription, of which only the left-hand end remains, the rest being broken off and lost. Above the tomb was another slab let into the sand-stone, of which the right-hand end exists, and a few more fragments have been recovered in the rubbish; not enough to make out the lines, but sufficient to show it was an inscription in verse, by Pope Damasus. How is this authorship traceable? Very easily. Not only do we know that this holy pope, already mentioned, took pleasure in putting verses, which he loved to write, on the tombs of martyrs,|| but the number of inscrip-

* Published by Bucherius in 1634.

† (Of) . . . nelius martyr.

‡ The crypt, we believe, was discovered before the stairs.

§ Of Cornelius Martyr Bishop.

|| These form the great bulk of his extant works in verse.

tions of his yet extant exhibit a particular and very elegant form of letters, known among antiquarians by the name of "Damasian." The fragments of this marble bear portions of verses, in this character.

To proceed : on the wall, right of the tomb, and on the same plane, were painted two full-length figures in sacerdotal garments, with glories round their heads, evidently of Byzantine work of the seventh century. Down the wall, by the left side of each, letter below letter, were their names ; some letters were effaced, which we supply in italics as follow :

SCI✠ CORNELI SCI✠ CIPRIANI.*

We here see how a foreigner, reading these two inscriptions, with the portraits, and knowing that the Church commemorates the two martyrs on the same day, might easily be led to suppose, that they were here deposited together. Finally, at the right hand of the tomb, stands a truncated column, about three feet high, concave at the top, as before described ; and as a confirmation of the use to which we said it might be put, St. Gregory has, in his list of oils sent to the Lombard Queen, "Oleum S. Cornelii," the oil of St. Cornelius.

We see then, how, during the second period, new ornaments, as well as greater conveniences, were added to the primitive simple forms of the cemeteries. But we must not, on that account, imagine that we are in any danger of mistaking these later embellishments for the productions of the early ages. The difference is so immense, that we might as easily blunder by taking a Rubens for a Beato Angelico, as by considering a Byzantine figure to be a production of the two first centuries.

We come now to the third period of these holy cemeteries, the sad one of their desolation. When the Lombards, and later the Saracens, began to devastate the neighborhood of Rome, and the catacombs were exposed to desecration, the popes extracted the bodies of the most illustrious martyrs, and placed them in the basilicas of the city. This went on till the eighth or ninth century ; when we still read of repairs made in the cemeteries by the sovereign pontiffs. The catacombs ceased to be so much places of devotion ; and the churches, which stood over their entrances, were destroyed, or fell to decay. Only those remained which were fortified, and could be defended. Such are the extramural basilicas of St. Paul on the Ostian way, of St. Sebastian on the Appian, St. Laurence on the Tiburtine, or in the Ager Veranus, St. Agnes on the Nomentan road, St. Pancratius on the Aurelian, and, greatest of all, St. Peter's on the Vatican. The first and last had separate *burghs* or cities round them ; and the traveller can still trace remains of strong walls round some of the others.

Strange it is, however, that the young antiquarian, whom we have frequently named with honor, should have re-discovered two of the basilicas over the entrance to the cemetery of Callistus, almost entire ; the one being a stable and bake-house, the other a wine-store. One is, most probably, that built by Pope Damasus, so often mentioned. The earth washed down, through air-holes, the spoliation practised during ages, by persons entering from vineyards through unguarded entrances, the mere wasting action of time and weather, have left us but a wreck of the ancient catacombs. Still there is much to be thankful for. Enough remains to verify the records left us in better times, and these serve to guide us to the reconstruction of our ruins. The present Pontiff has done more in a few years for these sacred places, than has been effected in centuries. The

* (The picture) of St. Cornelius Pope, of St. Cyprian." On the other side, on the other side, on a narrow wall projecting at a right angle, are two more similar portraits ; but only one name can be deciphered, that of St. Sixtus, or, as he is there and elsewhere called, Sustus. On the paintings of the principal saints may still be read, scratched in the mortar, in characters of the seventh century, the name of visitors to the tomb. Those of two priests are thus

✠LEO PRB IOANNIS PRB.

It may be interesting to add the entry in the Roman calendar :

"xviii. Kal. Oct. Cypriani Africæ Romæ celebratur in Callisti." "Sept. 14. (The deposition) of Cyprian in Africa ; at Rome it is kept in (the cemetery) of Callistus."

mixed commission which he has appointed have done wonders. With very limited means, they are going systematically to work, finishing as they advance. Nothing is taken from the spot where it is found ; but every thing is restored, as far as possible, to its original state. Accurate tracings are made of all the paintings, and plans of every part explored. To secure these good results, the Pope has, from his own resources, bought vineyards and fields, especially at Tor Marancia, where the cemetery of SS. Nereus and Achilleus is situated ; and we believe also over that of Callistus. The French emperor too has sent to Rome, artists, who have produced a most magnificent work, perhaps somewhat overdone, upon the catacombs : a truly imperial undertaking.

It is time, however, for us to rejoin our party below, and finish our inspection of these marvellous cities of departed saints, under the guidance of our friends the excavators.

CHAPTER IV.

WHAT DIOGENES DID TELL ABOUT THE CATACOMBS.

ALL that we have told our readers of the first period of the history of subterranean Rome, as ecclesiastical antiquarians love to call the catacombs, has no doubt been better related by Diogenes to his youthful hearers, as, taper in hand, they have been slowly walking through a long straight gallery, crossed, indeed, by many others, but adhered to faithfully ; with sundry pauses, and, of course, lectures, embodying what we have put together in our prosaic second chapter.

At length Diogenes turned to the right, and Torquatus looked around him anxiously.

"I wonder," he said, "how many turns we have passed by, before leaving this main gallery ?"

"A great many," answered Severus, drily.

"How many do you think, ten or twenty ?"

"Full that, I fancy ; for I never have counted them."

Torquatus had, however, wished to make sure. He continued, still pausing :

"How do you distinguish the right turn, then ? Oh, what is this ?" and he pretended to examine a small niche in the corner. But Severus too kept a sharp look-out, and saw that he was making a mark in the sand.

"Come, come along," he said, "or we shall lose sight of the rest, and not see which way they turn. That little niche is to hold a lamp ; you will find one at each angle. As to ourselves, we know every alley and turn here below, as you do those of the city above."

Torquatus was somewhat re-assured by this account of the lamps—those little earthen ones, evidently made on purpose for the catacombs, of which so many are there found. But not content, he kept as good count as he could of the turns, as they went ; and now with one excuse, and now with another, he constantly stopped, and scrutinised particular spots and corners. But Severus had a lynx's eye upon him, and allowed nothing to escape his attention.

At last they entered a doorway, and found themselves in a square chamber, richly adorned with paintings.

"What do you call this ?" asked Tiburtius.

"It is one of the many crypts, or *cubicula*,* which abound in our cemeteries," answered Diogenes ; "sometimes they are merely family sepultures, but generally they contain the tomb of some martyr, on whose anniversary we meet here. See that tomb opposite us, which, though flush with the wall, is arched over. That becomes, on such an occasion, the altar whereon the Divine mysteries are celebrated. You are of course aware of the custom of so performing them."

"Perhaps my two friends," interposed Pancratius, "so recently baptised, may not have heard it ; but I know it well. It is surely one of the glorious privileges of martyrdom, to have the Lord's sacred Body and precious Blood offered upon one's

* Chambers.

ashes, and to repose thus under the very feet of God.* But let us see well the paintings all over this crypt."

"It is on account of them that I brought you into this chamber, in preference to so many others in the cemetery. It is one of the most ancient, and contains a most complete series of pictures, from the remotest times down to some of my son's doing."

"Well, then, Diogenes, explain them systematically to my friends," said Pancratius. "I think I know most of them, but not all; and I shall be glad to hear you describe them."

"I am no scholar," replied the old man, modestly, "but when one has lived sixty years, man and boy, among things, one gets to know them better than others, because one loves them more. All here have been fully initiated, I suppose?" he added, with a pause.

"All," answered Tiburtius, "though not so fully instructed as converts ordinarily are. Torquatus and myself have received the sacred Gift."

"Enough," resumed the excavator. "The ceiling is the oldest part of the painting, as is natural; for that was done when the crypt was excavated, whereas the walls were decorated, as tombs were hollowed out. You see the ceiling has a sort of trellis work painted over it, with grapes, to represent perhaps our true Vine, of which we are the branches. There you see Orpheus sitting down, and playing sweet music, not only to his own flock, but to the wild beasts of the desert, which stand charmed around him."

"Why, that is a heathen picture altogether," interrupted Torquatus, with pettishness, and some sarcasm; "what has it to do with Christianity?"

"It is an allegory, Torquatus," replied Pancratius, gently, "and a favorite one. The use of Gentile images, when in themselves harmless, has been permitted. You see masks, for instance, and other pagan ornaments in this ceiling, and they belong generally to a very ancient period. And so our Lord was represented under the symbol of Orpheus, to conceal His sacred representation from Gentile blasphemy and sacrilege. Look, now, in that arch; you have a more recent representation of the same subject."

"I see," said Torquatus, "a shepherd with a sheep over his shoulders—the Good Shepherd; that I can understand; I remember the parable."

"But why is this subject such a favorite one?" asked Tiburtius; "I have observed it in other cemeteries."

"If you will look over the *arcosolium*,"† answered Severus, "you will see a fuller representation of the scene. But I think we had better first continue what we have begun, and finish the ceiling. You see that figure on the right?"

"Yes," replied Tiburtius; "it is that of a man apparently in a chest, with a dove flying towards him. Is that meant to represent the Deluge?"

"It is," said Severus, "as the emblem of regeneration by water and the Holy Spirit; and of the salvation of the world. Such is our beginning; and here is our end; Jonas thrown out of the boat, and swallowed by the whale; and then sitting in enjoyment under his gourd. The resurrection with our Lord, and eternal rest as its fruit."

"How natural is this representation in such a place!" observed Pancratius, pointing to the other side; "and here we have another type of the same consoling doctrine."

* Sic venerari ossa libet,
Ossibus altar et impositum;
Illa Dei sita sub pedibus;
Prospect hac, populo-que suos
Carminis propitiata fovet."

Prudentius, *peri stepe* lib. 43.

† With her relics gathered here.
The altar o'er them placed revere,
She beneath God's feet reposes,
Nor to us her soft eye closes,
Nor her gracious ear."

The idea that the martyr lies "beneath the feet of God" is in allusion to the Resurrection in the Blessed Eucharist.

† The arched tombs were so called. A homely illustration would be an arched fireplace, walled up to the height of three feet. The paintings would be inside, above the wall.

"Where?" asked Torquatus, languidly; "I see nothing but a figure bandaged all round, and standing up, like a huge infant in a small temple; and another person opposite to it."

"Exactly," said Severus; "that is the way we always represent the resurrection of Lazarus. Here look, is a touching expression of the hope of our fathers in persecution: The three Babylonian children in the fiery furnace."

"Well, now, I think," said Torquatus, "we may come to the *arcosolium*, and finish this room. What are these pictures around it?"

"If you look at the left side, you see the multiplication of the loaves and fishes. The fish* is you know the symbol of Christ."

"Why so?" asked Torquatus, rather impatiently. Severus turned to Pancratius, as the better scholar, to answer.

"There are two opinions about its origin," said the youth, readily; "one finds the meaning in the word itself; its letters forming the beginning of words, so as to mean 'Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior.'† Another puts it in the symbol itself; that as fish are born and live in the water, so is the Christian born of water, and buried with Christ in it, by baptism; Hence as we came along, we saw the figure of a fish carved on tombs, or its name engraven on them. Now go on, Severus."

"Then the union of the bread and the fish in one multiplication shows us how, in the Eucharist, Christ becomes the food of all.‡ Opposite is Moses striking the rock, from which all drank, and which is Christ, our drink as well as our food."

"Now, at last," said Torquatus, "we are come to the Good Shepherd."

"Yes," continued Severus, "you see Him in the centre of the *arcosolium*, in His simple tunic and leggings, with a sheep upon His shoulders, the recovered wanderer from the flock. Two more are standing at His sides; the truant ram on His right, the gentle ewe upon His left: the penitent in the post of honor. On each side, too, you see a person evidently sent by Him to preach. Both are leaning forward, and addressing sheep not of the fold. One on either side is apparently giving no heed to their words, but browsing quietly on, while one is turning up its eyes and head, looking and listening with eager attention. Rain is falling copiously on them; that is the grace of God. It is not difficult to interpret this picture."

"But what makes this emblem such a particular favorite?" again pressed Tiburtius.

"We consider this, and similar paintings, to belong chiefly to the time, when the Novatian heresy so much plagued the Church," answered Severus.

"And pray what heresy is that?" asked Torquatus, carelessly; for he thought he was losing time.

"It was, and indeed is, the heresy," answered Pancratius, "that teaches, that there are sins which the Church has not power to forgive; which are too great for God to pardon."

Pancratius was not aware of the effect of his words; but Severus, who never took off his eye from Torquatus, saw the blood go and come violently in his countenance.

"Is that a heresy?" asked the traitor, confused.

"Surely a dreadful one," replied Pancratius, "to limit the mercy and forgiveness of Him, who came to call not the just, but sinners to repentance. The Catholic Church has always held, that a sinner, however dark the dye, however huge the mass, of his crimes, on truly repenting, may receive forgiveness, through the penitential remedy left in her hands. And,

* The word is usually given in Greek, and Christ is familiarly called the *ichthys*, *ichthus*.

† This is the true interpretation of St. Optatus (*adv. Parm.* lib. iii.) and St. Augustine (*de C. D.* lib. xviii. c. 23).

‡ This is Tertullian's explanation (*de Baptismo*, lib. ii. c. 2).

§ In the same cemetery is another interesting painting. On a table lie a loaf and a fish; a priest is stretching his hands over them; and opposite is a female figure in adoration. The priest is the same as, in a picture close by, is represented administering baptism. In another chamber just cleared out, are very ancient decorations, such as masks, &c., and fishes bearing baskets of bread and flasks of wine, on their back as they swim.

¶ The type of the figure is that of St. Peter, as he is represented to us in the cemeteries. On a glass, bearing a picture of this scene the person striking the rock has written over his head, PETERVS.

therefore, she has always so much loved this type of the Good Shepherd, ready to run into the wilderness, to bring back a lost sheep."

"But suppose," said Torquatus, evidently moved, "that one who had become a Christian, and received the sacred Gift, were to fall away, and plunge into vice, and—and"—(his voice faltered)—"almost betray his brethren, would not the Church reject such a one from hope?"

"No, no," answered the youth; "these are the very crimes, which the Novatians insult the Catholics for admitting to pardon. The Church is a mother, with her arms ever open to re-embrace her erring children."

There was a tear trembling in Torquatus's eye; his lips quivered with the confession of his guilt, which ascended to them for a moment; but as if a black poisonous drop rose up his throat with it and choked him, he changed in a moment to a hard, obstinate look, bit his lip and said, with an effort at coolness, "It is certainly a consoling doctrine for those that need it."

Severus alone observed that a moment of grace had been forfeited, and that some despairing thought had quenched a flash of hope, in that man's heart. Diogenes and Majus, who had been absent, looking at a new place for opening a gallery near, now returned. Torquatus addressed the old master-digger:

"We have now seen the galleries and the chambers; I am anxious to visit the church in which we shall have to assemble."

The unconscious excavator was going to lead the way, when the inexorable artist interposed.

"I think, father, it is too late for to-day; you know we have got our work to do. These young friends will excuse us, especially as they will see the church in good time, and in better order also, as the holy Pontiff intends to officiate in it."

They assented; and when they arrived at the point where they had turned off from the first straight gallery to visit the ornamental chamber, Diogenes stopped the party, turned a few steps along an opposite passage, and said:

"If you pursue this corridor, and turn to the right, you come to the church. I have merely brought you here to show you an *arcosolium*, with a beautiful painting. You see here the Virgin Mother holding her Divine Infant in her arms, while the wise Easterns, here represented as four, though generally we only reckon three, are adoring Him."*

All admired the painting; but poor Severus was much chagrined at seeing how his good father had unwittingly supplied the information desired by Torquatus, and had furnished him with a sure clue to the desired turn, by calling his attention to the tomb close round it, distinguishable by so remarkable a picture.

When their company was departed he told all that he had observed to his brother, remarking, "That man will give us trouble yet: I strongly suspect him."

In a short time they had removed every mark which Torquatus had made at the turnings. But this was no security against his reckonings; and they determined to prepare for changing the road, by blocking up the present one and turning off at another point. For this purpose they had the sand of new excavations brought to the ends of a gallery which crossed the main avenue, where this was low, and left it heaped up there, till the faithful could be instructed of the intended change.

CHAPTER V.

ABOVE GROUND.

To recover our reader from his long subterranean excursion, we must take him with us on another visit to the "happy Campania," or "Company the blest," as an old writer might have

* There are several repetitions of this painting. One has been lately found, if we remember right, in the cemetery of Nereus and Achilles. It is long anterior to the Council of Chalcedon, whence this mode of representing our Lord is usually dated. It is given in our title-page.

called it. There we left Fabiola perplexed by some sentences which she had found. They came to her like a letter from another world; she hardly knew of what character. She wished to learn more about them, but she hardly durst inquire. Many visitors called the next day, and for several days after, and she often thought of putting before some or other of them the mysterious sentences, but she could not bring herself to do it.

A lady, whose life was like her own, philosophically correct, and coldly virtuous, came; and they talked together over the fashionable opinions of the day. She took out her vellum page to puzzle her; but she shrank from submitting it to her: it felt profane to do so. A learned man, well read in all branches of science and literature, paid her a long visit, and spoke very charmingly on the sublimer views of the older schools. She was tempted to consult him about her discovery; but it seemed to contain something higher than he could comprehend. It was strange that, after all, when wisdom or consolation was to be sought, the noble and haughty Roman lady should turn instinctively to her Christian slave. And so it was now. The first moment they were alone, after several days of company and visits, Fabiola produced her parchment, and placed it before Syra. There passed over her countenance an emotion not observable to her mistress; but she was perfectly calm, as she looked up from reading.

"That writing," said her mistress, "I got at Chromatius's villa, on the back of a note, probably by mistake. I cannot drive it out of my mind, which is quite perplexed by it."

"Why should it be so, my noble lady? Its sense seems plain enough."

"Yes; and that very plainness gives me trouble. My natural feelings revolt against this sentiment: I fancy I ought to despise a man who does not resent an injury, and return hatred for hatred. To forgive at most would be much; but to do good in return for evil, seems to me an unnatural exaction from human nature. Now, while I feel all this, I am conscious that I have been brought to esteem you, for conduct exactly the reverse of what I am naturally impelled to expect."

"Oh, do not talk of me, my dear mistress; but look at the simple principle; you honor it in others, too. Do you despise, or do you respect Aristides, for obliging a boorish enemy, by writing, when asked, his own name, on the shell that voted his banishment? Do you, as a Roman lady, condemn, or honor, the name of Coriolanus, for his generous forbearance to your city?"

"I venerate both, most truly, Syra; but then you know those were heroes, and not every-day men."

"And why should we not all be heroes?" asked Syra laughing.

"Bless me, child! what a world we should live in, if we were. It is very pleasant reading about the feats of such wonderful people; but one would be very sorry to see them performed by common men, every day."

"Why so?" pressed the servant.

"Why so? who would like to find a baby she was nursing, playing with, or strangling, serpents in the cradle? I should be very sorry to have a gentleman whom I invited to dinner, telling me coolly he had that morning killed a minotaur, or strangled a hydra; or to have a friend offering to send the Tiber through my stables, to cleanse them. Preserve us from a generation of heroes, say I." And Fabiola laughed heartily at the conceit. In the same good humor Syra continued:

"But suppose we had the misfortune to live in a country where such monsters existed, centaurs and minotaurs, hydras and dragons. Would it not be better that common men should be heroes enough to conquer them, than that we should have to send off to the other side of the world for a Theseus or a Hercules, to destroy them? In fact, in that case, a man would be no more a hero if he fought them, than a lion-slayer is in my country."

"Quite true, Syra; but I do not see the application of your idea."

"It is this: anger, hatred, revenge, ambition, avarice, are to my mind as complete monsters, as serpents or dragons; and

they attack common men as much as great ones. Why should not I try to be as able to conquer them as Aristides, or Coriolanus, or Cincinnatus? Why leave it to heroes only, to do what we can do as well?"

"And do you really hold this as a common moral principle? If so, I fear you will soar too high."

"No, dear lady. You were startled when I ventured to maintain that inward and unseen virtue was as necessary as the outward and visible: I fear I must surprise you still more."

"Go on, and do not fear to tell me all."

"Well, then, the principle of that system which I profess is this: that we must treat, and practise, as every-day and common virtue, nay, as simple duty, whatever any other code, the purest and sublimest that may be, considers heroic, and proof of transcendent virtue."

"That is indeed a sublime standard to form, of moral elevation; but mark the difference between the two cases. The hero is supported by the praises of the world; his act is recorded and transmitted to posterity, when he checks his passions, and performs a sublime action. But who sees, cares for, or shall requite, the poor obscure wretch, who in humble secrecy imitates his conduct?"

Syra, with solemn, reverential look and gesture, raised her eyes and her right hand to heaven, and slowly said, "His Father, who is in heaven, who maketh His sun to rise on the good and the bad, and raineth on the just and the unjust."

Fabiola paused for a time, overawed: then said affectionately and respectfully: "Again, Syra, you have conquered my philosophy. Your wisdom is consistent as it is sublime. A virtue heroic, even when unseen, you propose as the ordinary daily virtue of every one. Men must indeed become more than what gods have been thought to be, to attempt it; but the very idea is worth a whole philosophy. Can you lead me higher than this?"

"Oh, far!—far higher still."

"And where at length would you leave me?"

"Where your heart should tell you, that it had found peace."

CHAPTER VI.

DELIBERATIONS.

The persecution had now been some time raging in the East under Dioclesian and Galerius; and the decree for enkindling it throughout the West, had reached Maximian. But it had been resolved to make this a work, not of repression, but of extermination, of the Christian name. It had been determined to spare no one; but cutting off the chiefs of the religion first, to descend down to the wholesale butchery of the poorest classes. It was necessary for this purpose to concert measures, that the various engines of destruction might work in cruel harmony; that every possible instrument should be employed to secure completeness to the effort; and also that the majesty of imperial command should add its grandeur and its terror, to the crushing blow.

For this purpose, the emperor, though impatient to begin his work of blood, had yielded to the opinion of his counsellors, that the edict should be kept concealed, till it could be published simultaneously in every province, and government, of the West. The thundercloud, fraught with vengeance, would thus hang for a time, in painful mystery, over its intended victims, and then burst suddenly upon them, discharging upon their heads its mingled elements, and its "fire, hail, snow, ice, and boisterous blast."

It was in the month of November, that Maximian Hercules convoked the meeting in which his plans had finally to be adjusted. To it were summoned the leading officers of his court, and of the state. The principal one, the prefect of the city, had brought with him his son, Corvinus, whom he had proposed to be captain of a body of armed pursuivants, picked out for their savageness and hatred of Christians; who should

hunt them out, or down, with unrelenting assiduity. The chief prefects or governors of Sicily, Italy, Spain, and Gaul, were present, to receive their orders. In addition to these, several learned men, philosophers, and orators, among whom was our old acquaintance Calpurnius, had been invited; and many priests, who had come from different parts, to petition for heavier persecution, were commanded to attend.

The usual residence of the emperors, as we have seen was the Palatine. There was, however, another much esteemed by them, which Maximian Hercules in particular preferred. During the reign of Nero, the wealthy senator, Plantius Lateranus, was charged with conspiracy, and of course punished with death. His immense property was seized by the emperor, and part of this was his house, described by Juvenal, and other writers, as of unusual size and magnificence. It was beautifully situated on the Cælian hill, and on the southern verge of the city; so that from it was a view unequalled even in the vicinity of Rome. Stretching across the wavy Campagna, here bestrided by colossal aqueducts, crossed by lines of roads, with their fringes of marble tombs, and bespangled all over with glittering villas, set like gems in the dark green enamel of laurel and cypress, the eye reached, at evening, the purple slope of hills on which, as on a couch, lay stretched luxuriously Alba and Tusculum, with "their daughters," according to oriental phrase, basking brightly in the setting sun. The craggy range of Sabine mountains on the left, and the golden expanse of the sea on the right, of the beholder, closed in this perfect landscape.

It would be attributing to Maximian a quality which he did not possess, were we to give him credit for loving a residence so admirably situated, through any taste for the beautiful. The splendor of the buildings, which he had still further adorned, or possibly the facility of running out of the city for the chase of boar and wolf, was the motive of this preference. A native of Sirmium, in Sclavonia, a reputed barbarian, therefore of the lowest extraction, a mere soldier of fortune, without any education, endowed with little more than a brute strength, which made his surname of Hercules most appropriate, he had been raised to the purple by his brother-barbarian, Diocles, known as the emperor Dioclesian. Like him, covetous to meanness, and spendthrift to recklessness, addicted to the same coarse vices and foul crimes, which a Christian pen refuses to record, without restraint of any passion, without sense of justice, or feeling of humanity, this monster had never ceased to oppress, persecute, and slay whoever stood in his way. To him the coming persecution looked like an approaching feast does to a glutton, who requires the excitement of a surfeit, to relieve the monotony of daily excess. Gigantic in frame, with the well-known features of his race, with the hair on his head and face more yellow than red, shaggy and wild, like tufts of straw, with eyes restlessly rolling in a compound expression of suspicion, profligacy, and ferocity, this almost last of Rome's tyrants struck terror in the heart of any beholder, except a Christian. Is it wonderful that he hated the race and its name?

In the large basilica, or hall, then, of the *Ædes Lateranæ*,* Maximian met his motley council, in which secrecy was ensured by penalty of death. In the semicircular apse at the upper end of the hall, sat the emperor, on an ivory throne richly adorned, and before him were arranged his obsequious and almost trembling advisers. A chosen body of guards kept the entrance; and the officer in command, Sebastian, was leaning negligently against it on the inside, but carefully noted every word that was spoken.

Little did the emperor think, that the hall in which he sat, and which he afterwards gave, with the contiguous palace, to Constantine, as part of the dowry of his daughter, Fausta, would be transferred by him to the head of the religion he was planning to extirpate, and become, retaining its name of the Lateran Basilica, the cathedral of Rome, "of all the churches of the city and of the world the mother and chief."† Little did he imagine, that on the spot whereon rested his throne,

* The Lateran house or palace.

† Inscription on the front, and medals, of the Lateran Basilica.

would be raised a Chair whence commands should issue, to reach worlds unknown to Roman sway, from an immortal race of sovereigns, spiritual and temporal.

Precedence was granted, by religious courtesy, to the priests; each of whom had his tale to tell. Here a river had overflowed its banks, and done much mischief to the neighboring plains; there an earthquake had thrown down part of a town; on the northern frontiers the barbarians threatened invasion; at the south, the plague was ravaging the pious population. In every instance, the oracles had declared, that it was all owing to the Christians, whose toleration irritated the gods, and whose evil charms brought calamity on the empire. Nay, some had afflicted their votaries by openly proclaiming, that they would utter no more, till the odious Nazarenes had been exterminated; and the great Delphic oracle had not hesitated to declare, "that *the Just* did not allow the gods to speak."

Next came the philosophers and orators, each of whom made his own long-winded oration; during which Maximian gave unequivocal signs of weariness. But as the Emperors in the East had held a similar meeting, he considered it his duty to sit out the annoyance. The usual calumnies were repeated, for the ten-thousandth time, to an applauding assembly; the stories of murdering and eating infants, of committing foul crimes, of worshipping martyrs' bodies, of adoring an ass's head, and inconsistently enough of being unbelievers, and serving no God. These tales were all most firmly believed: though probably their reciters knew perfectly well, they were but good sound heathen lies, very useful in keeping up a horror of Christianity.

But, at length, up rose the man, who was considered to have most deeply studied the doctrines of the enemy, and best to know their dangerous tactics. He was supposed to have read their own books, and to be drawing up a confutation of their errors, which would fairly crush them. Indeed, so great was his weight with his own side, that when he asserted that Christians held any monstrous principle, had their supreme pontiff in person contradicted it, every one would have laughed at the very idea, of taking his word for his own belief, against the assertion of Calpurnius.

He struck up a different strain, and his learning quite astonished his fellow-sophists. He had read the original books, he said not only of the Christians themselves, but of their forefathers, the Jews; who, having come into Egypt in the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus, to escape from a famine in their own country, through the arts of their leader, Josephus, bought up all the corn there, and sent it home. Upon which Ptolemy imprisoned them, telling them, that as they had eaten up all the corn, they should live on the straw, by making bricks with it for building a great city. Then Demetrius Phalerus, hearing from them of a great many curious histories of their ancestors, shut up Moses and Aaron, their most learned men, in a tower, having shaved half their beards, till they should write in Greek all their records. These rare books Calpurnius had seen, and he would build his argument entirely on them. This race made war upon every king and people, that came in their way and destroyed them all. It was their principle, if they took a city, to put every one to the sword; and this was all because they were under the government of their ambitious priests; so that when a certain king Saul, called also Paul, spared a poor captive monarch whose name was Agag, the priests ordered him to be brought out and hewed in pieces.

"Now," continued he, "these Christians are still under the domination of the same priesthood, and are quite as ready to-day, under their direction, to overthrow the great Roman empire, burn us all in the Forum, and even sacrilegiously assail the sacred and venerable heads of our divine emperors."

A thrill of horror ran through the assembly at this fecital. It was soon hushed, as the emperor opened his mouth to speak.

"For my part," he said, "I have another and stronger reason for my abhorrence of these Christians. They have dared to establish in the heart of the empire, and in this very city, a supreme religious authority, unknown here before, independent

of the government of the State, and equally powerful over their minds as this. Formerly, all acknowledged the emperor as supreme in religious, as in civil, rule. Hence he bears still the title of Pontifex Maximus. But these men have raised up a divided power, and consequently bear but a divided loyalty. I hate, therefore, as a usurpation in my dominions, this sacerdotal sway over my subjects. For I declare that I would rather hear of a new rival starting up to my throne, than of the election of one of these priests in Rome."*

This speech, delivered in a harsh grating voice, and with a vulgar foreign accent, was received with immense applause; and plans were formed for the simultaneous publication of the Edict through the West, and for its complete and exterminating execution.

Then turning sharp upon Tertullus, the emperor said: "Prefect, you said you had some one to propose for superintending these arrangements, and for merciless dealings with these traitors."

"He is here, sire, my son Corvinus." And Tertullus handed the youthful candidate to the grim tyrant's footstool, where he knelt. Maximian eyed him keenly, burst into a hideous laugh, and said: "Upon my word, I think he'll do. Why, prefect, I had no idea you had such an ugly son. I should think he is just the thing; every quality of a thorough-paced, unconscientious scapegrace is stamped upon his features."

Then turning to Corvinus, who was scarlet with rage, terror and shame, he said to him: "Mind you, sirrah, I must have clean work of it; no hacking and hewing, no blundering. I pay up well, if I am well served; but I pay off well, too, if badly served. So now go; and remember, that if your back can answer for a small fault, your head will for a greater. The lictors' *fascies* contain an axe as well as rods."

The emperor rose to depart, when his eye caught Fulvius, who had been summoned as a paid court spy, but who kept as much in the background as possible. "Ho, there my eastern worthy," he called out to him; "draw nearer."

Fulvius obeyed with apparent cheerfulness, but with real reluctance; much the same as if he had been invited to go very near a tiger, the strength of whose chain he was not quite sure about. He had seen, from the beginning, that his coming to Rome had not been acceptable to Maximian, though he knew not fully the cause. It was not merely that the tyrant had plenty of favorites of his own to enrich, and spies to pay, without Dioclesian's sending him more from Asia, though this had its weight; but it was more. He believed in his heart that Fulvius had been sent principally to act the spy upon himself, and to report to Nicomedia the sayings and doings of his court. While, therefore, he was obliged to tolerate him, and even employ him, he mistrusted and disliked him, which in him was equivalent to hating him. It was some compensation, therefore, to Corvinus, when he heard his more polished confederate publicly addressed, as rudely as himself, in the following terms:

"None of your smooth, put-on looks for me, fellow. I want deeds, not smirks. You came here as a famous plot-hunter, a sort of stoat, to pull conspirators out of their nests, or suck their eggs for me. I have seen nothing of this so far; and yet you have had plenty of money to set you up in business. These Christians will afford you plenty of game; so make yourself ready, and let us see what you can do. You know my ways; you had better look sharp about you, therefore, or you may have to look at something very sharp before you. The property of the convicted will be divided between the accusers and the treasury; unless I see particular reasons for taking the whole to myself. Now you may go."

Most thought that these particular reasons would turn out to be very general.

* These are the very words of Declian, on the election of St. Cornelius to the See of St. Peter: "Cum multo patientius audiret levati adversum se semulum principem, quam constitui Romæ Dei sacerdotem." *S. Cypr. Ep. lii. ad Antoninum*, p. 68, ed. Maur. Could there be a stronger proof that, under the heathen empire, the papal power was sensible and external, even to the extent of exciting imperial jealousy?

CHAPTER VII.

DARK DEATH.

A few days after Fabiola returned from the country, Sebastian considered it his duty to wait upon her, to communicate so much of the dialogue between Corvinus and her black slave, as he could without causing unnecessary suffering. We have already observed, that of the many noble youths whom Fabiola had met in her father's house, none had excited her admiration and respect except Sebastian. So frank, so generous, so brave, yet so unboasting; so mild, so kind in act and speech, so unselfish and so careful of others, blending so completely in one character nobleness and simplicity, high wisdom and practical sense, he seemed to her the most finished type of manly virtue, one which would not easily suffer by time, nor weary by familiarity.

When, therefore, it was announced to her that the officer Sebastian wished to speak to her alone, in one of the halls below, her heart beat at the unusual tidings, and conjured up a thousand strange fancies, about the possible topics of his interview. This agitation was not diminished, when, after apologizing for his seeming intrusion, he remarked with a smile, that, well knowing how sufficiently she was already annoyed by the many candidates for her hand, he felt regret at the idea, that he was going to add another, yet undeclared, to her list. If this ambiguous preface surprised, and perhaps elated her, she was soon depressed again, upon being told, it was the vulgar and stupid Corvinus. For her father, even, little as he knew how to discriminate characters out of business, had seen enough of him at his late banquet, to characterise him to his daughter by those epithets.

Sebastian, fearing rather the physical, than the moral, activity of Afra's drugs, thought it right to inform her of the compact between the two dabblers in the black art, the principal efficacy of which, however, seemed to consist in drawing money from the purse of a reluctant dupe. He of course said nothing of what related to the Christians in that dialogue. He put her on her guard, and she promised to prevent the nightly excursions of her necromancer slave. What Afra had engaged to do, she did not for a moment believe it was ever her intention to attempt; neither did she fear arts which she utterly despised. Indeed Afra's last soliloquy seemed satisfactorily to prove that she was only deceiving her victim. But she certainly felt indignant at having been bargained about by two such vile characters, and having been represented as a grasping, avaricious woman, whose price was gold.

"I feel," she said at last to Sebastian, "how very kind it is of you to come thus to put me on my guard; and I admire the delicacy with which you have unfolded so disagreeable a matter, and the tenderness with which you have treated every one concerned."

"I have only done in this instance," replied the soldier, "what I should have done for any human being—save him, if possible, from pain or danger."

"Your friends, I hope you mean," said Fabiola, smiling; "otherwise I fear your whole life would go in works of unrequited benevolence."

"And so let it go; it could not be better spent."

"Surely you are not in earnest, Sebastian. If you saw one who had ever hated you, and sought your destruction, threatened with a calamity which would make him harmless, would you stretch out your hand to save or succor him?"

"Certainly I would. While God sends His sunshine and His rain equally upon His enemies, as upon His friends, shall weak man frame another rule of justice?"

At these words Fabiola wondered; they were so like those of her mysterious parchment, identical with the moral theories of her slave.

"You have been in the East, I believe, Sebastian," she asked him, rather abruptly, "was it there that you learnt these principles? For I have one near me, who is yet, by her own

choice, a servant, a woman of rare moral perceptions, who has propounded to me the same idea, and she is an Asiatic."

"It is not in any distant country that I learnt them; for here I sucked them in with my mother's milk; though, originally, they doubtless came from the East."

"They are certainly beautiful in the abstract," remarked Fabiola; "but death would overtake us before we could half carry them out, were we to make them our principles of conduct."

"And how better could death find us, though not surprise us, than in thus doing our duty, even if not to its completion?"

"For my part," resumed the lady, "I am of the old Epicurean poet's mind. This world is a banquet, from which I shall be ready to depart when I have had my fill—*ut conviva satur**—and not till then. I wish to read life's book through, and close it calmly only when I have finished its last page."

Sebastian shook his head, smiling, and said, "The last page of this world's book comes but in the middle of the volume, wherever 'death' may happen to be written. But on the next page begins the illuminated book of a new life—without a last page."

"I understand you," replied Fabiola, good humoredly; "you are a brave soldier, and you speak as such. You must be always prepared for death from a thousand casualties; we seldom see it approach suddenly; it comes more mercifully, and stealthily, upon the weak. You no doubt are musing on a more glorious fate, on receiving in front full sheaves of arrows from the enemy, and falling covered with honor. You look to the soldier's funeral pile with trophies erected over it. To you, after death, opens its bright page the book of glory."

"No, no, gentle lady," exclaimed Sebastian, emphatically. "I mean not so. I care not for glory, which can only be enjoyed by an anticipating fancy. I speak of vulgar death, as it may come to me in common with the poorest slave; consuming me by slow burning fever, wasting me by long, lingering consumption, racking me by slowly eating ulcers; nay, if you please, by the still crueller inflictions of men's wrath. In any form let it come; it comes from a hand that I love."

"And do you really mean, that death, so contemplated, would be welcomed by you?"

"As joyful as is the epicure, when the doors of the banquet-hall are thrown wide open, and he sees beyond them the brilliant lamps, the glittering table, and its delicious viands, with its attendant ministers well-girt, and crowned with roses; as blithe as is the bride when the bridegroom is announced, coming with rich gifts, to conduct her to her new home, will my exulting heart be, when death, under whatever form, throws back the gates, iron on this side, but golden on the other, which lead to a new and perennial life. And I care not how grim the messenger may be, that proclaims the approach of Him who is celestially beautiful."

"And who is He?" asked Fabiola, eagerly. "Can He not be seen, save through the fleshless ribs of death?"

"No," replied Sebastian; "for it is He who must reward us, not only for our lives, but for our deaths also. Happy they whose inmost hearts, which He has ever read, have been kept pure and innocent, as well as their deeds have been virtuous! For them is this bright vision of Him, whose true rewards only then begin."

How very like Syra's doctrines! she thought. But before she could speak again, to ask whence they came, a slave entered, stood on the threshold, and respectfully said:

"A courier, madam, is just arrived from Baize."†

"Pardon me, Sebastian!" she exclaimed. "Let him enter immediately."

The messenger came in, covered with dust, and jaded, having left his tired horse at the gate; and offered her a sealed packet.

Her hand trembled as she took it; and while she was unloosening its bands, she hesitatingly asked,

"From my father?"

* "As a sated guest."

† A fashionable watering-place near Naples.

"About him, at least," was the messenger's ominous reply. She opened the sheet, glanced over it, shrieked, and fell. Sebastian caught her before she reached the ground, laid her on a couch, and delicately left her in the hands of her hand-maids, who had rushed in at the cry.

One glance had told her all. Her father was dead.

CHAPTER VIII.

DARKER STILL.

WHEN Sebastian came into the court, he found a little crowd of domestics gathered round the sourier, listening to the details of their master's death.

The letter of which Torquatus was the bearer to him, had produced its desired effect. He called at his villa, and spent a few days with his daughter, on his way to Asia. He was more than usually affectionate; and when they parted, both father and daughter seemed to have a melancholy foreboding that they would meet no more. He soon, however, recovered his spirits at Baïæ, where a party of good livers anxiously awaited him; and where he considered himself obliged to stay, while his galley was being fitted up, and stored with the best wines and provisions which Campania afforded, for his voyage. He indulged, however, his luxurious tastes to excess; and on coming out of a bath, after a hearty supper, he was seized with a chill, and in four-and-twenty hours was a corpse. He had left his undivided wealth to his only child. In fine, the body was being embalmed when the courier started, and was to be brought by his galley to Ostia.

On hearing this sad tale, Sebastian was almost sorry that he had spoken as he had done of death; and left the house with mournful thoughts.

Fabiola's first plunge into the dark abyss of grief was deep and dismal, down into unconsciousness. Then the buoyancy of youth and mind bore her up again to the surface; and her view of life, to the horizon, was as of a boundless ocean of black seething waves, on which floated no living thing save herself. Her woe seemed utter and unmeasured; and she closed her eyes with a shudder, and suffered herself to sink again into oblivion, till once more roused to wakefulness of mind. Again and again she was thus tossed up and down, between transient death and life, while her attendants applied remedies to what they deemed a succession of alarming fits and convulsions. At length she sat up, pale, staring, and tearless, gently pushing aside the hand that tried to administer restoratives to her. In this state she remained long; a stupor, fixed and deadly, seemed to have entranced her; the pupils were almost insensible to the light, and fears were whispered of her brain becoming oppressed. The physician, who had been called, uttered distinctly and forcibly into her ears the question: "Fabiola, do you know that your father is dead?" She started, fell back, and a bursting flood of tears relieved her heart and head. She spoke of her father, and called for him amidst her sobs, and said wild and incoherent, but affectionate things about, and to, him. Sometimes she seemed to think him still alive, then she remembered he was dead; and so she wept and moaned, till sleep took the turn of tears, in nursing her shattered mind and frame.

Euphrosyne and Syra alone watched her. The former had, from time to time, put in the commonplaces of heathen consolation. Had reminded her too, how kind a master, how honest a man, how loving a father he had been. But the Christian sat in silence, except to speak gentle and soothing words to her mistress, and served her with an active delicacy, which even then was not noticed. What could she do more, unless it was to pray? What hope for else, than that a new grace was folded up, like a flower, in this tribulation; that a bright angel was riding in the dark cloud that overshadowed her humbled lady?

As grief receded, it left room for thought. This came to

Fabiola in a gloomy and searching form. "What was become of her father? Whither was he gone? Had he melted into unexistence, or had he been crushed into annihilation? Had his life been searched through by that unseen eye which sees the invisible? Had he stood the proof of that scrutiny which Sebastian and Syra had described? Impossible! Then what had become of him?" She shuddered as she thought, and put away the reflection from her mind.

Oh, for a ray from some unknown light, that would dart into the grave, and show her what it was! Poetry had pretended to enlighten it, and even glorify it; but had only, in truth, remained at the door, as a genius with drooping head, and torch reversed. Science had stepped in, and come out scared, with tarnished wings, and lamp extinguished in the fetid air for it had only discovered a charnel-house. And philosophy had barely ventured to wander round and round, and peep in with dread, and recoil, and then prate or babble; and, shrugging its shoulders, own, that the problem was yet unsolved, the mystery still veiled. Oh, for something, or some one, better than all these, to remove the dismal perplexity!

While these thoughts dwell like gloomy night on the heart of Fabiola, her slave is enjoying the vision of light, clothed in mortal form, translucent and radiant, rising from the grave as from an alembic, in which have remained the grosser qualities of matter, without impairing the essence of its nature. Spiritualised and free, lovely and glorious, it springs from the very hot-bed of corruption. And another, and another from land and sea; from reeking cemetery, and from beneath consecrated altar; from the tangled thicket where solitary murder has been committed on the just, and from fields of ancient battle done by Israel for God; like crystal fountains springing into the air, like brilliant signal-lights, darted from earth to heaven, till a host of millions, side by-side, repeoples creation with joyous and undying life. And how knows she this? Because One, greater and better than poet, sage, or sophist, had made the trial; had descended first into the dark couch of death, had blessed it, as He had done the cradle, and made infancy sacred; rendering also death a holy thing, and its place a sanctuary. He went into it in the darkest of evening, and He came forth from it in the brightest of morning; He was laid there wrapped in spices, and He rose again robed in His own fragrant incorruption. And from that day the grave had ceased to be an object of dread to the Christian soul; for it continued what He had made it,—the furrow into which the seed of immortality must needs be cast.

The time was not come for speaking of these things to Fabiola. She mourned still, as they must mourn who have no hope. Day succeeded day in gloomy meditation on the mystery of death, till other cares mercifully roused her. The corpse arrived, and such a funeral followed as Rome then seldom witnessed. Processions by torch-light, in which the waxen effigies of ancestors were borne, and a huge funeral pile, built up of aromatic wood, and scented by the richest spices of Arabia, ended in her gathering up a few handfuls of charred bones, which were deposited in an alabaster urn, and placed in a niche of the family sepulchre, with the name inscribed of their former owner.

Calpurnius spoke the funeral oration; in which, according to the fashionable ideas of the day, he contrasted the virtues of the hospitable, and industrious citizen with the false morality of those men called Christians, who fasted and prayed all day, and were stealthily insinuating their dangerous principles into every noble family, and spreading disloyalty and immorality in every class. Fabius, he could have no doubt, if there was any future existence, whereon philosophers differed, was now basking on a green bank in Elysium, and quaffing nectar. "And oh!" concluded the old whining hypocrite, who would have been sorry to exchange one goblet of Falernian for an amphora* of that beverage, "oh! that the gods would hasten the day when I, his humble client, may join him in his shady repose and sober banquets!" This noble sentiment gained immense applause.

* A large earthenware vessel, in which the Romans stored wine.

To this care succeeded another. Fabiola had to apply her vigorous mind to examine, and close her father's complicated affairs. How often was she pained at the discovery of what to her seemed injustice, fraud, over-reaching and oppression, in the transactions of one whom the world had applauded as the most honest and liberal of public contractors!

In a few weeks more, in the dark attire of a mourner, Fabiola went forth to visit her friends. The first of these was her cousin Agnes.

CHAPTER IX.

THE FALSE BROTHER.

WE must take our reader back a few steps in the history of Torquatus. On the morning after his fall, he found, on awaking, Fulvius at his bed-side. It was the falconer, who, having got hold of a good hawk, was come to tame him, and train him to strike down the dove for him, in return for a well-fed slavery. With all the coolness of a practised hand, he brought back to his memory every circumstance of the preceding night's debauch, his utter ruin, and only means of escape. With unfeeling precision he strengthened every thread of the last evening's web, and added many more meshes to it.

The position of Torquatus was this: if he made one step towards Christianity, which Fulvius assured him would be fruitless, he would be at once delivered to the judge, and cruelly punished with death. If he remained faithful to his compact of treason, he should want for nothing.

"You are hot and feverish," at last concluded Fulvius; "an early walk, and fresh air, will do you good."

The poor wretch consented; and they had hardly reached the Forum, when Corvinus, as if by accident, met them. After mutual salutations, he said: "I am glad to have fallen in with you; I should like to take you, and show you my father's workshop."

"Workshop?" asked Torquatus with surprise.

"Yes, where he keeps his tools; it has just been beautifully fitted up. Here it is, and that grim old foreman, Catulus, is opening the doors."

They entered into a spacious court with a shed round it, filled with engines of torture of every form. Torquatus shrunk back.

"Come in, masters, don't be afraid," said the old executioner. "There is no fire put on yet, and nobody will hurt you, unless you happen to be a wicked Christian. It's for them we have been polishing up of late."

"Now, Catulus," said Corvinus, "tell this gentleman, who is a stranger, the use of these pretty toys you have here."

Catulus, with good heart, showed him round his museum of horrors, explaining everything with such hearty good-will, and no end of jokes not quite fit for record, that in his enthusiasm he nearly gave Torquatus practical illustrations of what he described, having once almost caught his ear in a pair of sharp pincers, and another time brought down a mallet within an inch of his teeth.

The rack, a large gridiron, an iron chair with a furnace in it for heating it, large boilers for hot oil or scalding-water baths; ladles for melting lead, and pouring it neatly into the mouth; pincers, hooks and iron combs of varied shapes, for laying bare the ribs; scorpions, or scourges, armed with iron or leaden knobs; iron collars, manacles, and fetters of the most tormenting make; in fine, swords, knives, and axes in tasteful varieties, were all commented upon with true relish, and an anticipation of much enjoyment in seeing them used on those hard-headed and thick-skinned Christians.*

Torquatus was thoroughly broken down. He was taken to the baths of Antoninus, where he caught the attention of old Cucumio, the head of the wardrobe department, or capsarius, and his wife Victoria, who had seen him at church. After a

good refection, he was led to a gambling-hall in Thermæ, and lost, of course. Fulvius lent him money, but for every farthing, exacted a bond. By these means, he was, in a few days, completely subdued.

Their meetings were early and late; during the day he was left free, lest he should lose his value, through being suspected by Christians. Corvinus had determined to make a tremendous dash at them, so soon as the edict should have come out. He therefore exacted from Torquatus, as his share of the compact, that the spy should study the principal cemetery where the Pontiff intended to officiate. This Torquatus soon ascertained; and his visit to the cemetery of Callistus was in fulfilment of his engagement. When that struggle between grace and sin took place in his soul, which Severus noticed, it was the image of Catulus and his hundred plagues, with that of Fulvius and his hundred bonds, that turned the scale in favor of perdition. Corvinus, after receiving his report, and making from it a rough chart of the cemetery, determined to assail it, early, the very day after the publication of the decree.

Fulvius took another course. He determined to become acquainted, by sight, with the principal clergy and leading Christians of Rome. Once possessed of this knowledge, he was sure no disguise would conceal them from his piercing eyes: and he would easily pick them up, one by one. He therefore insisted upon Torquatus's taking him as his companion to the first great function that should collect many priests and deacons round the Pope. He overruled every remonstrance, dispelled every fear, and assured Torquatus that once in, by his password, he should behave perfectly like any Christian. Torquatus soon informed him that there would be an excellent opportunity at the coming ordination in that very month of December.

CHAPTER X.

THE ORDINATION IN DECEMBER.

WHOEVER has read the history of the early Popes will have become familiar with the fact, recorded almost invariably of each, that he held certain ordinations in the month of December, wherein he created so many priests and deacons, and so many bishops for different places. The first two orders were conferred to supply clergy for the city; the third was evidently to furnish pastors for other dioceses. In later times, the ember-days in December, regulated by the festival of St. Lucy, were those on which the Supreme Pontiff held his consistories, in which he named his cardinal priests and deacons, and preconized, as it is called, the bishops of all parts of the world. And, though this function is not now coincident with the periods of ordination, still it is continued essentially for the same purpose.

Marcellinus, under whose pontificate our narrative is placed, is stated to have held two ordinations in this month—that is, of course, in different years. It was to one of these that we have alluded as about to take place.

Where was this solemn function to be performed, was Fulvius's first inquiry. And we cannot but think that the answer will be interesting to the Christian antiquary. Nor can our acquaintance with the ancient Roman Church be complete without our knowing the favored spot where Pontiff after Pontiff preached, and celebrated the divine mysteries, and held his councils, or those glorious ordinations which sent forth not only bishops but martyrs to govern other churches, and gave to a St. Laurence his diaconate, or to St. Novatus or St. Timotheus his priesthood. There, too, a Polycarp or Irenæus visited the successor of St. Peter; and thence received their commission the apostles who converted our King Lucius to the faith.

The house which the Roman Pontiffs inhabited, and the church in which they officiated, till Constantine installed them in the Lateran palace and basilica, the residence and cathedral of the illustrious line of martyr-popes for 300 years, can be no

* These instruments of cruelty are mentioned in the *Acts of the Martyrs*, and

guided by national or personal prepossession, we will follow a learned living antiquarian, who, intent upon another research, accidentally has put together all the data requisite for our purpose.*

We have described the house of Agnes's parents as situated in the *Vicus Patricius*, or the Patrician street. This had another name, for it was called the street of the Cornelii, *Vicus Corneliarum*, because in it lived the illustrious family of that name. The centurion whom St. Peter converted† belonged to this family; and possibly to him the apostle owed his introduction at Rome to the head of his house, Cornelius Pudens. This senator married Claudia, a noble British lady; and it is singular how the unchaste poet Martial vies with the purest writers, when he sings the wedding-song of these two virtuous spouses.

It was in their house that St. Peter lived; and his fellow-apostle, St. Paul, enumerates them among his familiar friends as well: "Eubulus and Pudens, and Linus and Claudia, and all the brethren salute thee."‡ From that house, then, went forth the bishops, whom the Prince of the Apostles sent in every direction, to propagate, and die for, the faith of Christ. After the death of Pudens, the house became the property of his children, or grandchildren,§ two sons and two daughters. The latter are better known, because they have found a place in the general calendar of the Church, and because they have given their names to two of the most illustrious churches in Rome—those of St. Praxedes and St. Pudentiana. It is the latter, which Alban Butler calls "the most ancient church in the world,"|| that marks at once the *Vicus Patricius* and the house of Pudens.

As in every other city, so in Rome, the eucharistic sacrifice was offered originally in one place by the bishop. And even after more churches were erected, and the faithful met in them, communion was brought to them from the one altar by the deacons and distributed by the priests. It was Pope Evaristus, the fourth successor of St. Peter, who multiplied the churches of Rome with circumstances peculiarly interesting.

This Pope, then, did two things. First, he enacted that from thenceforward no altars should be erected except of stone, and that they should be consecrated; and secondly, "he distributed the *titles*;" that is, he divided Rome into parishes, to the churches of which he gave the name of "title." The connection of these two acts will be apparent to anyone looking at Genesis xxviii.; where, after Jacob had enjoyed an angelic vision, while sleeping with a stone for his pillow, we are told that, "trembling he said, How terrible is this place. *This is no other than the house of God, and the gate of heaven.* And Jacob arising in the morning, took the stone . . . and set it up for a title, pouring oil on the top of it."¶

The church or oratory, where the sacred mysteries were celebrated, was truly, to the Christian, the house of God; and the stone altar, set up in it, was consecrated by the pouring of oil upon it, as is done to this day (for the whole law of Evaristus remains in full force); and thus became a *title* or monument.**

Two interesting facts are elicited from this narrative. One is that to that time there was only one church with an altar in Rome; and no doubt has ever been raised, that this was the church afterwards, and yet, known by the name of St. Pudentiana. Another is, that the one altar till then existing was not of stone. It was, in fact, the wooden altar used by St. Peter, and kept in that church, till transferred by St. Sylvester to the Lateran basilica, of which it forms the high altar.†† We fur-

ther conclude, that the law was not retrospective, and that the wooden altar of the Popes was preserved at that church, where it had been first erected, though from time to time it might be carried, and used elsewhere.

The church in the *Vicus Patricius*, therefore, which existed previous to the creation of *titles*, was not itself a title. It continued to be the episcopal, or rather the pontifical church of Rome. The pontificate of St. Pius I., from 142 to 157, forms an interesting period in its history, for two reasons.

First, that Pope, without altering the character of the church itself, added to it an oratory which he made a *title*;* and having collated to it his brother Pastor, it was called the *titulus Pastoris*, the designation, for a long time, of the cardinalate attached to the church. This shows that the church itself was more than a title.

Secondly, in this pontificate came to Rome, for the second time, and suffered martyrdom, the holy and learned apologist St. Justin. By comparing his writings with his Acts,‡ we come to some interesting conclusions respecting Christian worship in times of persecution.

"In what place do the Christians meet?" he is asked by the judge.

"Do you think," he replies, "that we all meet in one place? It is not so." But when interrogated where he lived, and where he held meetings with his disciples, he answered, "I have lived till now near the house of a certain Martin, at the bath known as the Timotine. I have come to Rome for the second time, nor do I know any other place but the one I have mentioned." The Timotine or Timothean baths were part of the house of the Pudens family, and are those at which we have said that Fulvius and Corvinus met early one morning. Novatus and Timotheus were the brothers of the holy virgins Praxedes and Pudentiana; and hence the baths were called the Novatian and the Timotine, as they passed from one brother to another.

St. Justin, therefore, lived on this spot, and, as he knew no other in Rome, attended divine worship there. The very claims of hospitality would suggest it. Now in his apology, describing the Christian liturgy, of course such as he saw it, he speaks of the officiating priest in terms that sufficiently describe the bishop, or supreme pastor of the place; not only by giving him a title applied to bishops in antiquity,‡ but by describing him as the person who has the care of orphans and widows, and succors the sick, the indigent, prisoners, strangers who come as guests, who, "in one word, undertakes to provide for all in want." This could be no other than the bishop or pope himself.

We must further observe, that St. Pius is recorded to have erected a fixed baptismal font in this church, another prerogative of the cathedral, transferred with the papal altar to the Lateran. It is related that the holy Pope Stephen (A.D. 257) baptised the tribune Nemesius and his family, with many others, in the *title* of Pastor.§ And here it was that the blessed deacon Laurentius distributed the rich vessels of the church to the poor.

In time this name has given way to another. But the place is the same; and no doubt can exist, that the church of St. Pudentiana was, for the first three centuries, the humble cathedral of Rome.

It was to this spot, therefore, that Torquatus unwillingly consented to lead Fulvius, that he might witness the December ordination.

We find either in sepulchral inscriptions, in martyrologies, or in ecclesiastical history, abundant traces of all the orders,

* "Sopra l'antichissimo altare di legno, rinchiuso nell' altare papale," &c. "On the most ancient wooden altar, enclosed in the papal altar of the most holy Lateran basilica." By Monsig. D. Bartolini. Rome, 1852.

† Acts, 10.

‡ 2 Tim., iv., 21.

§ A second or younger Pudens is spoken of.

|| May the 19th.

** Verses 17, 18.

†† It is not necessary to go into the classical uses of the word *titulus*.

‡ Only the Pope can say mass on it, or a cardinal, by authority of a special bull. The high altar has been lately magnificently decorated. A plank of the wooden altar has always been preserved in St. Peter's altar, at St. Pudentiana's. It has been lately compared with the wood of the Lateran altar, and found to be

* Its site is now occupied by the Caetani chapel.

† Prefixed to the Maurist edition of his works, or in Ruinart, l.

‡ Ο πρεσβυτης, *præpositus*, see Heb. xiii. 17. Ο των Ρωμαίων προεστωρ Βικτωρ, "Victor, bishop of the Romans." Euseb. H. E. I. v. 24. The Greek word used is the same as in St. Justin.

§ The learned Bianchini plausibly conjectures that the *station* on Easter Sunday is not at the Lateran (the cathedral), nor at St. Peter's, where the Pope officiates, at one of which it would naturally be expected to be, but at the Liberian basilica, because it only used to be held for the administration of baptism at St. Pudentiana's, which is only a stone's throw from it.

as still conferred in the Catholic Church. Inscriptions perhaps more commonly record those of Lector or reader, and of Exorcist. We will give one interesting example of each. Of a Lector:

CINNAMIVS OPAS LECTOR TITVLI FASCIOLÆ AMICVS
PAVPERVM QVI VIXIT ANN. XLVI. MENS. VII. D.
VIII. DEPOSIT IN PACE X KAL. MART.*

Of an Exorcist

MACEDONIUS
EXORCISTA DE KATOLICA.†

A difference was, however, that one order was not necessarily a passage, or step to another; but persons remained, often for life, in one of these lesser orders. There was not, therefore, that frequent administration of these, nor probably was it publicly performed with the higher orders.

Torquatus, having the necessary pass-word, entered, accompanied by Fulvius, who soon showed himself expert in acting as others did around him. The assembly was not large. It was held in a hall of the house, converted into a church or oratory, which was mainly occupied by the clergy, and the candidates for orders. Among the latter were Marcus and Marcellianus, the twin brothers, fellow-converts of Torquatus, who received the deaconship, and their father Tranquillinus, who was ordained priest. Of these Fulvius impressed well in his mind the features and figure; and still more did he take note of the clergy, the most eminent of Rome, there assembled. But on one, more than the rest, he fixed his piercing eye, studying his every gesture, look, voice, and lineament.

This was the Pontiff who performed the august rite. Marcellinus had already governed the Church six years, and was of a venerable old age. His countenance, benign and mild, scarcely seemed to betoken the possession of that nerve which martyrdom required, and which he exhibited in his death for Christ. In those days every outward characteristic which could have betrayed the chief shepherd to the wolves was carefully avoided. The ordinary simple garb of respectable men was worn. But there is no doubt that when officiating at the altar, a distinctive robe, the forerunner of the ample chasuble, of spotless white, was cast over the ordinary garment. To this the bishop added a crown, or *infula*, the origin of the later mitre; while in his hand he held the crosier, emblem of his pastoral office and authority.

On him who now stood facing the assembly, before the sacred altar of Peter, which was between him and the people,‡ the Eastern spy steadied his keenest glance. He scanned him minutely, measured, with his eye, his height, defined the color of his hair and complexion, observed every turn of his head, his walk, his action, his tones, almost his breathing, till he said to himself, "If he stirs abroad, disguised as he may choose, that man is my prize. And I know his worth."

CHAPTER XI.

PRIE IVN PAVSA
BET PRAETIOSA
ANNORVM PVLLA
VIRGO XII TANTVM
ANCILLA DEI ET XPI
FL. VINCENTIO ET
FRAVITO. VC' CONSS

If the learned Thomassinus had known this lately discovered inscription, when he proved, with such abundance of learning;

* "Cinnamius Opas Lector of the title of Fasciola" (now S. Nereus and Achilleus), "the friend of the poor, who lived forty-six years, seven months and eight days. Interred in peace the tenth day before the calends of March." From St. Paul's.

† "Macedonius, an exorcist of the Catholic Church." From the cemetery of SS. Thraso and Saturninus, on the Salarian way.

‡ In the great and old basilica of Rome the celebrant faces the faithful.

§ The day before the first of June, ceased to live Præstiosa, a girl (*puella*), a virgin of only twelve years of age, the handmaid of God and of Christ. In the church of Flavius Vincentius, and Præstiosa, a consular woman. Found in the cemetery of Callistus.

that virginity could be professed in the early Church, at the age of twelve, he would certainly have quoted it.* For can we doubt "that the girl who was a virgin of *only* twelve years of age, was such by consecration to God? Otherwise, the more tender her age, the less wonder in her state of maidenhood.

But although this, the nubile age, according to Roman law, was the one at which such dedication to God was permitted by the Church, she reserved to a maturer period that more solemn consecration, when the veil of virginity was given by the bishop; generally on Easter Sunday. That first act probably consisted of nothing more than receiving from the hands of parents a plain dark dress. But when any danger threatened, the Church permitted the anticipation, by many years, of that period, and fortified the spouses of Christ in their holy purpose, by her more solemn blessing.†

A persecution of the most strange character was on the point of breaking out, which would not spare the most tender of the flock; and it was no wonder that they, who in their hearts had betrothed themselves to the Lamb, as His chaste spouses for ever, should desire to come to His nuptials before death. They longed naturally to bear the full-grown lily, entwined round the palm, should this be their portion.

Agnes had from her infancy chosen for herself this holiest state. The superhuman wisdom which had ever exhibited itself in her words and actions, blending itself so gracefully with the simplicity of an innocent and guileless childhood, rendered her ripe, beyond her years, for any measure of indulgence, which could be granted, to hearts that panted for their chaste bridal-hour. She eagerly seized on the claim that coming danger gave her, to a more than usual relaxation of that law, which prescribed a delay of more than ten years in the fulfilling of her desire. Another postulant joined her in this petition.

We may easily imagine that a holy friendship had been growing between her and Syra, from the first interview which we have described between them. This feeling had been increased by all that Agnes had heard Fabiola say, in praise of her favorite servant. From this, and from the slave's more modest reports, she was satisfied that the work to which she had devoted herself, of her mistress's conversion, must be entirely left in her hands. It was evidently prospering, owing to the prudence and grace with which it was conducted. In her frequent visits to Fabiola, she contented herself with admiring and approving what her cousin related of Syra's conversations, but she carefully avoided every expression that could raise suspicion of any collusion between them.

Syra as a dependant, and Agnes as a relation, had put on mourning upon Fabius's death; and hence no change of habit would raise suspicion in his daughter's mind of their having taken some secret, or some joint step. Thus far they could safely ask to be admitted at once to receive the solemn consecration to perpetual virginity. Their petition was granted; but for obvious reasons was kept carefully concealed. It was only a day or two before the happy one of their spiritual nuptials, that Syra told it, as a great secret, to her blind friend.

"And so," said the latter, pretending to be displeased, "you want to keep all the good things to yourself. Do you call that charitable, now?"

"My dear child," said Syra, soothingly, "don't be offended. It was necessary to keep it quite a secret."

"And therefore, I suppose, poor I must not even be present?"

"Oh, yes, Cæcilia, to be sure you may; and see all that you can," replied Syra, laughing.

"Never mind about the seeing. But tell me, how will you be dressed? What have you to get ready?"

Syra gave her an exact description of the habit and veil, their color and form.

* *Fetus et Novi Ecclæsiæ Disciplina; circa Beneficia.* Par. I. lib. iii. (Luc. 127.)

† Thomass, p. 792.

"How very interesting!" she said. "And what have you to do?"

The other, amused at her unwonted curiosity, described minutely the short ceremonial.

"Well now, one question more," resumed the blind girl. "When and where is all this to be? You said I might come, so I must know the time and place."

Syra told her it would be at the *title* of Pastor, at daybreak, on the third day from that. "But what has made you so inquisitive, dearest? I never saw you so before. I am afraid you are becoming quite worldly."

"Never you mind," replied Cæcilia, "if people choose to have secrets for me, I do not see why I should not have some of my own."

Syra laughed at her affected pettishness, for she knew well the humble simplicity of the poor child's heart. They embraced affectionately and parted. Cæcilia went straight to the kind Lucina, for she was a favorite in every house. No sooner was she admitted to that pious matron's presence, than she flew to her, threw herself upon her bosom, and burst into tears. Lucina soothed and caressed her, and soon composed her. In a few minutes she was again bright and joyous, and evidently deep in conspiracy with the cheerful lady about something which delighted her. When she left she was all buoyant and blithe, and went to the house of Agnes, in the hospital of which the good priest Dionysius lived. She found him at home; and casting herself on her knees before him, talked so fervently to him that he was moved to tears, and spoke kindly and consolingly to her. The *Te Deum* had not yet been written; but something very like it rang in the blind girl's heart as she went to her humble home.

The happy morning at length arrived, and before daybreak the more solemn mysteries had been celebrated, and the body of the faithful had dispersed. Only those remained who had to take part in the more private function, or who were specially asked to witness it. These were Lucina and her son, the aged parents of Agnes, and of course Sebastian. But Syra looked in vain for her blind friend; she had evidently retired with the crowd; and the gentle slave feared she might have hurt her feelings by her reserve before their last interview.

The hall was still shrouded in the dusk of a winter's twilight, although the glowing east without foretold a bright December day. On the altar burned perfumed tapers of large dimensions, and round it were gold and silver lamps of great value, throwing an atmosphere of mild radiance upon the sanctuary. In the front of the altar was placed the chair no less venerable than itself, now enshrined in the Vatican, the chair of Peter. On this was seated the venerable Pontiff, with staff in hand and crown on head, and round him stood his ministers, scarcely less worshipful than himself.

From the gloom of the chapel there came forth first the sound of sweet voices, like those of angels, chanting in soft cadence a hymn which anticipated the sentiments soon after embodied in the

"Jesu corona virginum."

Then there emerged into the light of the sanctuary the procession of already consecrated virgins, led by the priests and deacons who had charge of them. And in the midst of them appeared two, whose dazzling white garments shone the brighter amidst their dark habits. These were the two new postulants, who, as the rest defiled and formed a line on either side, were conducted, each by two professed, to the foot of the altar, where they knelt at the Pontiff's feet. Their bridesmaids, or sponsors, stood near to assist in the function.

Each as she came was asked solemnly what she desired, and expressed her wish to receive the veil, and practise its duties, under the care of those chosen guides. For, although consecrated virgins had begun to live in community before this period, yet many continued to reside at home; and persecution interfered with enclosure. Still there was a place in church, boarded off for the consecrated virgins; and they often met apart, for particular instruction and devotions.

The bishop then addressed the young aspirants, in glowing and affectionate words. He told them how high a call it was to lead on earth the lives of angels, who neither marry nor give in marriage, to tread the same chaste path to heaven which the Incarnate Word chose for His own Mother; and arrived there, to be received into the pure ranks of that picked host, that follows the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. He expatiated on the doctrine of St. Paul, writing to the Corinthians on the superiority of virginity to every other state; and he feelingly described the happiness of having no love on earth but one, which instead of fading, opens out into immortality, in heaven. For bliss, he observed, is but the expanded flower which Divine love bears on earth.

After this brief discourse, and an examination of the candidates for this great honor, the holy Pontiff proceeded to bless the different portions of their religious habits, by prayers probably nearly identical with those now in use, and these were put on them by their respective attendants. The new religious laid their heads upon the altar, in token of their oblation of self. But in the West, the hair was not cut, as it was in the East, but was always left long. A wreath of flowers was then placed upon the head of each; and though it was winter, the well-guarded terrace of Fabiola had been made to furnish bright and fragrant blossoms.

All seemed ended; and Agnes, kneeling at the foot of the altar, was motionless in one of her radiant raptures, gazing fixedly upwards; while Syra, near her, was bowed down, sunk into the depths of her gentle humility, wondering how she should have been found worthy of so much favor. So absorbed were both in their thanksgiving, that they perceived not a slight commotion through the assembly, as if something unexpected was occurring.

They were aroused by the bishop repeating the question: "My daughter, what dost thou seek?" when, before they could look round, each felt a hand seized, and heard the answer returned in a voice dear to both: "Holy father, to receive the veil of consecration to Jesus Christ, my only love on earth, under the care of these two holy virgins, already His happy spouses."

They were overwhelmed with joy and tenderness; for it was the poor blind Cæcilia. When she heard of the happiness that awaited Syra, she had flown, as we have seen, to the kind Lucina, who soon consoled her, by suggesting to her the possibility of obtaining a similar grace. She promised to furnish all that was necessary; only Cæcilia insisted that her dress should be coarse, as became a poor beggar-girl. The priest Dionysius presented to the Pontiff, and obtained the grant of, her prayer; and as she wished to have her two friends for sponsors, it was arranged that he should lead her up to the altar after their consecration. Cæcilia, however, kept her secret.

The blessings were spoken, and the habit and veil put on; when they asked her if she had brought no wreath of flowers. Timidly she drew from under her garment the crown she had provided, a bare, thorny branch, twisted into a circle, and presented it, saying:

"I have no flowers to offer to my bridegroom, neither did He wear flowers for me. I am but a poor girl, and do you think my Lord will be offended if I ask Him to crown me, as he was pleased to be crowned Himself? And then, flowers represent virtues in those who wear them; but my barren heart has produced nothing better than these."

She saw not, with her blind eyes, how her two companions snatched the wreaths from her hands to put on hers; but a sign from the Pontiff checked them; and amidst moistened eyes she was led forth, all joyous, in her thorny crown; emblem of what the Church has always taught, that the very queenship of virtue is innocence crowned by penance.

* "Jesu the virgin's crown," the hymn for virgins.

CHAPTER XII.

THE NOMENTAN VILLA.

THE Nomentan road goes from Rome eastward, and between it and the Salarian is a deep ravine, beyond which, on the side of the Nomentan way lies a gracefully undulating ground. Amidst this is situated a picturesque round temple, and near it a truly beautiful basilica, dedicated to St. Agnes. Here was the villa belonging to her, situated about a mile and a half from the city; and thither it had been arranged that the two, now the three, newly consecrated should repair, to spend the day in retirement and tranquil joy. Few more such days, perhaps, would ever be granted them.

We need not describe this rural residence, except to say that everything in it breathed contentment and happiness. It was one of those genial days which a Roman winter supplies. The rugged Apennines were slightly powdered with snow; the ground was barely crisp, the atmosphere transparent, the sunshine glowing, and the heavens cloudless. A few greyish curls of melting smoke from the cottages, and the leafless vines, alone told that it was December. Everything seemed to know and love the gentle mistress of the place. The doves came and perched upon her shoulder or her hand; the lambs in the paddock frisked, and ran to her the moment she approached, and took the green fragrant herbs which she brought them with evident pleasure; but none owned her kindly sway so much as old Molossus, the enormous watchdog. Chained beside the gate, so fierce was he that none but a few favorite domestics durst go near him. But no sooner did Agnes appear than he crouched down, and wagged his bushy tail, and whined, till he was let loose; for now a child might approach him. He never left his mistress's side; he followed her like a lamb; and if she sat down, he would lie at her feet, looking into her face, delighted to receive, on his huge head, the caresses of her slender hand.

It was, indeed, a peaceful day; sometimes calm and quiet, soft and tender, as the three spoke together of the morning's happiness, and of the happier morning of which it was a pledge, above the liquid amber of their present skies; sometimes cheerful and even merry, as the two took Cæcilia to task for the trick she had played them. And she laughed cheerily, as she always did, and told them she had a better trick in store for them yet; which was, that she would cut them out when that next morning came, for she intended to be the first at it, and not the last.

Fabiola had, in the meantime, come to the villa to pay her first visit to Agnes after her calamity, and to thank her for her sympathy. She walked forward, but stopped suddenly on her coming near the spot where this happy group were assembled. For when she beheld the two who could see the outward brightness of heaven, hanging over her who seemed to hold all its splendour within her soul, she saw at once, in the scene, the verification of her dream. Yet unwilling to intrude herself unexpectedly upon them, and anxious to find Agnes alone, and not with her own slave and a poor blind girl, she turned away before she was noticed, and walked towards a distant part of the grounds. Still she could not help asking herself why she could not be cheerful and happy as they? Why was there a gulf between them?

But the day was not destined to finish without its clouds; it would be too blissful for earth. Besides Fabiola, another person had started from Rome, to pay a less welcome visit to Agnes. This was Fulvius, who had never forgotten the assurances of Fabius, that his fascinating address and brilliant ornaments had turned the weak head of Agnes. He had waited till the first days of mourning were over, and he respected the house in which he had once received such a rude reception, or rather suffered such a summary ejection. Having ascertained that, for the first time, she had gone without her parents, or any male attendants, to her suburban villa, he considered it a good opportunity for pressing his suit. He rode out of the Nomentan gate, and was soon at Agnes's. He dismounted;

said he wished to see her on important business, and after some importunity, was admitted by the porter. He was directed along a walk, at the end of which she would be found. The sun was declining, and her companions had strolled to a distance; and she was sitting alone in a bright sunny spot, with old Molossus crouching at her feet. The slightest approach to a growl from him, rare when he was with her, made her look up from her work of tying together such winter flowers as the others brought her, while she suppressed, by raising a finger, this expression of instinctive dislike.

Fulvius came near with a respectful, but freer air than usual as one already assured of his request.

"I have come, Lady Agnes," he said, "to renew to you the expression of my sincere regard; and I could not have chosen a better day, for brighter or fairer scarcely the summer sun could have bestowed."

"Fair, indeed, and bright it has been to me," replied Agnes, borne back in mind to the morning's scene; "and no sun in my life has ever given me fairer—it can only give me *one* more fair."

Fulvius was flattered, as if the compliments was to his presence, and answered, "The day, no doubt you mean, of your espousals with one who may have won your heart."

"That is indeed done," she replied, as if unconsciously; "and this is his own precious day."

"And was that wreathed veil upon your head, placed there in anticipation of this happy hour?"

"Yes: it is the sign my beloved has placed upon my countenance, that I recognize no lover but himself."*

"And who is this happy being? I was not without hopes, nor will I renounce them yet, that I have a place in your thoughts, perhaps in your affections."

Agnes seemed scarcely to heed his words. There was no appearance of shyness or timidity in her looks or manner, no embarrassment even:

"Spotless without, and innocent within,
She feared no danger, for she knew no sin."

Her childlike countenance remained bright, open, and guileless; her eyes mildly beaming, looked straight upon Fulvius's face with an earnest simplicity, that made him almost quail before her. She stood up now, with graceful dignity, as she replied:

"Milk and honey exhaled from his lips, as the blood from his stricken cheek impressed itself on mine."†

She is crazed, Fulvius was just beginning to think; when the inspired look of her countenance, and the clear brightness of her eye, as she gazed forwards towards some object seen by herself alone, overawed and subdued him. She recovered in an instant; and again he took heart. He resolved at once to pursue his demand.

"Madam," he said, "you are trifling with one who sincerely admires and loves you. I know from the best authority—yes, the *best* authority—that of a mutual friend departed, that you have been pleased to think favorably of me, and to express yourself not opposed to my urging my claims, to your hand. I now, therefore, seriously and earnestly solicit it. I may seem abrupt and informal, but I am sincere and warm."

"Begone from me, food of corruption!" she said with calm majesty; "for already a lover has secured my heart, for whom alone I keep my troth, to whom I intrust myself with undivided devotion; one whose love is chaste, whose caresses pure, whose brides never put off their virginal wreaths."‡

Fulvius, who had dropped on his knee as he concluded his last sentence, and had thus drawn forth that severe rebuke, rose, filled with spite and fury, at having been so completely deluded. "Is it not enough to be rejected," he said, "after having been encouraged, but must insult be heaped on me too?"

* "D secede a me pabu um mortis, quia jam ab alio amatore præventa sum." "Ipsi soli servo fidem, ipsi me tota devotione committo." "Quem cum amavero casta sum, cum tetigero nuda sum cum accepero virgo sum." *Ibid.*

† "Posuit signum in faciem meam, ut nūquam præter eum amatorem admit- tam." *Official St. Agnes.*

‡ "Mel et lac ex ejus ore suscepi, et sanguis ejus ornavit genas meas." *Ibid.*

and must I be told to my face that another has been before me to-day?—Sebastian, I suppose, again——”

“Who are you?” exclaimed an indignant voice behind him, “that dare to utter with disdain, the name of one whose honor is untarnished, whose virtue is as unchallenged as his courage?”

He turned round, and stood confronted with Fabiola, who, having walked for sometime about the garden, thought she would now probably find her cousin disengaged, and by herself. She had come upon him suddenly, and had caught his last words.

Fulvius was abashed, and remained silent.

Fabiola, with a noble indignation, continued. “And who, too, are you, who, not content with having once thrust yourself into my kinswoman’s house, to insult her, presume now to intrude upon the privacy of her rural retreat?”

“And who are you,” retorted Fulvius, “who take upon yourself to be imperious mistress in another’s house?”

“One,” replied the lady, “who, by allowing my cousin to meet you first at her table, and there discovering your designs upon an innocent child, feels herself bound in honor and duty to thwart them, and to shield her from them.”

She took Agnes by the hand, and was leading her away; and Molossus required what he never remembered to have received before, but what he took delightedly, a gentle little tap to keep him from more than growling; when Fulvius, gnashing his teeth, muttered audibly:

“Haughty Roman dame! thou shalt bitterly rue this day and hour. Thou shalt know and feel how Asia can revenge.”

CHAPTER XIII.

THE EDICT.

The day being at length arrived for its publication in Rome, Corvinus fully felt the importance of the commission intrusted to him, of affixing in its proper place in the Forum, the edict of extermination against the Christians, or rather the sentence of their very name. News had been received from Nicodemia, that a brave Christian soldier, named George, had torn down a similar decree, and had manfully suffered death for his boldness. Corvinus was determined that nothing of the sort should happen in Rome; for he feared too seriously the consequences of such an occurrence to himself; he therefore took every precaution in his power. The edict had been written in large characters, upon sheets of parchment joined together; and these were nailed to a board, firmly supported by a pillar, against which it was hung, not far from the Puteal Libonis, the magistrate’s chair in the Forum. This, however, was not done till the Forum was deserted, and night had set in. It was thus intended that the edict should meet the eyes of the citizens early in the morning, and strike their minds with more tremendous effect.

To prevent the possibility of any nocturnal attempt to destroy the precious document, Corvinus, with much the same cunning precaution as was taken by the Jewish priests to prevent the Resurrection, obtained for a night-guard to the Forum, a company of the Pannonian cohort, a body composed of soldiers belonging to the fiercest races of the North, Dacians, Pannonians, Sarmatians, and Germans, whose uncouth features, savage aspect, matted sandy hair, and bushy red moustaches, made them appear absolutely ferocious to Roman eyes. These men could scarcely speak Latin, but were ruled by officers of their own countries, and formed, in the decline of the empire, the most faithful body-guard of the reigning tyrants, often their own fellow-countrymen; for there was no excess too monstrous for them to commit, if duly commanded to execute it.

A number of these savages, ever rough and ready, were distributed so as to guard every avenue of the Forum, with strict orders to pierce through, or hew down, any one who should attempt to pass without the watchword, or *sygbatum*. This

was every night distributed by the general in command, through his tribunes and centurions, to all the troops. But to prevent all possibility of any Christian making use of it that night, if he should chance to discover it, the cunning Corvinus had one chosen, which he felt sure no Christian would use. It was NUMEN IMPERATORUM: the “Divinity of the Emperors.”

The last thing which he did was to make his rounds, giving to each sentinel the strictest injunctions; and most minutely to the one whom he had placed close to the edict. This man had been chosen for his post on account of his rude strength and huge bulk, and the peculiar ferocity of his looks and character. Corvinus gave him the most rigid instructions, how he was to spare nobody, but to prevent any one’s interference with the sacred edict. He repeated to him again and again the watchword; and left him, already half-stupid with *sabaia* or beer,* in the merest animal consciousness, that it was his business, not an unpleasant one, to spear, or sabre, some one or other before morning. The night was raw and gusty, with occasional sharp and slanting showers; and the Dacian wrapped himself in his cloak, and walked up and down, occasionally taking a long pull at a flask concealed about him, containing a liquor said to be distilled from the wild cherries of the Thuringian forests; and in the intervals muddily meditating, not on the wood or river, by which his young barbarians were at play, but how soon it would be time to cut the present emperor’s throat, and sack the city.

While all this was going on, old Diogenes and his hearty sons were in their poor house in the Suburra, not far off, making preparations for their frugal meal. They were interrupted by a gentle tap at the door, followed by the lifting of the latch, and the entrance of the two young men, whom Diogenes at once recognised and welcomed.

“Come in, my noble young masters; how good of you thus to honor my poor dwelling! I hardly dare offer you our plain fare; but if you will partake of it you will indeed give us a Christian love-feast.”

“Thank you most kindly, father Diogenes,” answered the elder of the two, Quadratus, Sebastian’s sinewy centurion; “Pancratius and I have come expressly to sup with you. But not as yet; we have some business in this part of the town, and after it, we shall be glad to eat something. In the meantime, one of your youths can go out and cater for us. Come, we must have something good; and I want you to cheer yourself with a moderate cup of generous wine.”

Saying this he gave his purse to one of the sons, with instructions to bring home some better provisions than he knew the simple family usually enjoyed. They sat down; and Pancratius, by way of saying something, addressed the old man. “Good Diogenes, I have heard Sebastian say that you remember seeing the glorious Deacon Laurentius die for Christ. Tell me something about him.”

“With pleasure,” answered the old man. “It is now nearly forty-five years since it happened,* and as I was older then than you are now, you may suppose I remember all quite distinctly. He was indeed a beautiful youth to look at: so mild and sweet, so fair and graceful; and his speech was so gentle, so soft, especially when speaking to the poor. How they all loved him! I followed him every where; I stood by, as the venerable Pontiff Sixtus was going to death, and Laurentius met him, and so tenderly reproached him, just as a son might a father, for not allowing him to be his companion in the sacrifice of himself, as he had ministered to him in the sacrifice of our Lord’s body and blood.”

“Those were splendid times, Diogenes, were they not?” interrupted the youth; “how degenerate we are now! What a different race! Are we not, Quadratus?”

The rough soldier smiled at the generous sincerity of his complaint, and bid Diogenes go on.

* Est autem sabaia ex hordeo vel frumento in liquorem conversis pauperibus in Ilyrico potus.” “Sabaia is the drink of the poor in Ilyria, made of barley or wheat, transformed into a liquid.” *Amian. Marcellinus*, l. vi. c. xvi. 8, p. 422, ed. Lips.

"I saw him, too, as he distributed the rich plate of the Church to the poor. We have never had any thing so splendid since. There were golden lamps and candlesticks, censers, chalices and patens,* besides an immense quantity of silver melted down, and distributed to the blind, the lame and the indigent."

"But tell me," asked Pancratius, "how did he endure his last dreadful torment? It must have been frightful."

"I saw it all," answered the old fessor, "and it would have been intolerably frightful in another. He had been first placed on the rack, and variously tormented, and he had not uttered a groan; when the judge ordered that horrid bed, or gridiron, to be prepared and heated. To look at his tender flesh blistering and breaking over the fire, and deeply scored with red burning gashes that cut to the bone where the iron bars went across; to see the steam, thick as from a cauldron, rise from his body, and hear the fire hiss beneath him, as he melted away into it; and every now and then to observe the tremulous quivering that crept over the surface of his skin, the living motion which the agony gave to each separate muscle, and the sharp spasmodic twitches which convulsed and gradually contracted his limbs; all this, I own, was the most harrowing spectacle I have ever beheld in all my life. But to look into his countenance was to forget all this. His head was raised up from the burning body, and stretched out as if fixed on the contemplation of some most celestial vision, like that of his fellow-deacon Stephen. His face glowed indeed with the heat below, and the perspiration flowed down it; but the light from the fire shining upward, and passing through his golden locks, created a glory round his beautiful head and countenance, which made him look as if already in heaven. And every feature, serene and sweet as ever, was so impressed with an eager, longing look, accompanying the upward glancing of his eye, that you would willingly have changed places with him."

"That I would," again broke in Pancratius, "and as soon as God pleases! I dare not think that I could stand what he did; for he was indeed a noble and heroic Levite, while I am only a weak, imperfect boy. But do you not think, dear Quadratus, that strength is given in that hour proportionate to our trials, whatever they may be? You, I know, would stand any thing; for you are a fine stout soldier, accustomed to toil and wounds. But as for me, I have only a willing heart to give. Is that enough, think you?"

"Quite, quite, my dear boy," exclaimed the centurion, full of emotion, and looking tenderly on the youth, who with glistering eyes, having risen from his seat, had placed his hands upon the officer's shoulders. "God will give you strength, as He has already given you courage. But we must not forget our night's work. Wrap yourself well up in your cloak, and bring your toga quite over your head; so! It is a wet and bitter night. Now, good Diogenes, put more wood on the fire, and let us find supper ready on our return. We shall not be long absent; and just leave the door ajar."

"Go, go, my sons," said the old man, "and God speed you! whatever you are about, I am sure it is something praise-worthy."

Quadratus sturdily drew his chlamys, or military cloak, around him, and the two youths plunged into the dark lanes of the Suburra, and took the direction of the Forum. While they were absent the door was opened with the well-known salutation of "thanks to God;" and Sebastian entered, and inquired anxiously if Diogenes had seen any thing of the two young men; for he had got a hint of what they were going to do. He was told they were expected in a few moments.

A quarter of an hour had scarcely elapsed, when hasty steps were heard approaching; the door was pushed open and was as quickly shut, and then fast barred, behind Quadratus and Pancratius.

"Here it is," said the latter, producing, with a hearty laugh, a bundle of crumpled parchment.

"What?" asked all eagerly.

"Why, the grand decree, of course," answered Pancratius,

with boyish glee; "look here. *DOMINI NOSTRI DIOCLETIANUS ET MAXIMIANUS, INVICTI, SENIORES AUGUSTI, PATRES IMPERATORUM ET CÆSARUM,** and so forth. Here it goes!" And he thrust it into the blazing fire, while the stalwart sons of Diogenes threw a faggot over it to keep it down, and drown its crackling. There it frizzled, and writhed, and cracked, and shrunk, first one letter or word coming up, then another; first an emperor's praise, and then an anti-Christian blasphemy; till all had subsided into a black ashy mass.

And what else, or more, would those be in a few years who had issued that proud document, when their corpses should have been burnt on a pile of cedar-wood and spices, and their handful of ashes be scraped together, hardly enough to fill a gilded urn? And what also, in very few years more, would that heathenism be, which it was issued to keep alive, but a dead letter at most, and as worthless a heap of extinguished embers as lay on that hearth? And the very empire which these "unconquered" Augusti were bolstering up by cruelty and injustice, how in a few centuries would it resemble that annihilated decree? the monuments of its grandeur lying in ashes, or in ruins, and proclaiming that there is no true Lord but one stronger than Cæsars, the Lord of lords; and that neither counsel nor strength of man shall prevail against Him.

Something like this did Sebastian think, perhaps, as he gazed abstractedly on the expiring embers of the pompous and cruel edict which they had torn down, not for a wanton frolic, but because it contained blasphemies against God and His holiest truths. They knew that if they should be discovered, ten-fold tortures would be their lot; but Christians in those days, when they contemplated and prepared for martyrdom, made no calculation on that head. Death for Christ, whether quick and easy, or lingering and painful, was the end for which they looked; and like brave soldiers going to battle, they did not speculate where a shaft or a sword might strike them, whether a death-blow would at once stun them out of existence, or they should have to writhe for hours upon the ground, mutilated or pierced, to die by inches among the heaps of unheeded slain.

Sebastian soon recovered, and had hardly the heart to reprove the perpetrators of this deed. In truth, it had its ridiculous side, and he was inclined to laugh at the morrow's dismay. This view he gladly took; for he saw Pancratius watched his looks with some trepidation, and his centurion looked a little disconcerted. So, after a hearty laugh, they sat down cheerfully to their meal; for it was not midnight, and the hour for commencing the fast, preparatory to receiving the holy Eucharist, was not arrived. Quadratus's object, besides kindness, in this arrangement, was partly, that if surprised, a reason for their being there might be apparent, partly to keep up the spirits of his younger companion and of Diogenes's household, if alarmed at the bold deed just performed. But there was no appearance of any such feeling. The conversation soon turned upon recollections of Diogenes's youth, and the good old fervent times, as Pancratius would persist in calling them. Sebastian saw his friend home, and then took a round, to avoid the Forum in seeking his own abode. If any one had seen Pancratius that night, when alone in his chamber preparing to retire to rest, he would have seen him every now and then almost laughing at some strange but pleasant adventure.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE DISCOVERY.

At the first dawn of morning, Corvinus was up; and, notwithstanding the gloominess of the day, proceeded straight to the Forum. He found his outposts quite undisturbed, and hastened to the principal object of his care. It would be use-

* Prudentius, in his hymn on St. Laurence

* "Our lords Diocletian and Maximian, the unconquered, elder Augusti fathers of the Emperors and Cæsars."

less to attempt describing his astonishment, his rage, his fury, when he saw the blank board, with only a few shreds of parchment left, round the nails; and beside it standing, in unconscious stolidity, his Dacian sentinel.

He would have darted at his throat like a tiger, if he had not seen, in the barbarian's twinkling eye, a sort of hyena squint, which told him he had better not. But he broke out at once into a passionate exclamation:

"Sirrah! how has the edict disappeared? Tell me directly!"

"Softly, softly, Herr Kornweiner," answered the imperturbable Northern. "There it is as you left it in my charge."

"Where, you fool? Come and look at it."

The Dacian went to his side, and for the first time confronted the board; and after looking at it for some moments, exclaimed: "Well, is not that the board you hung up last night?"

"Yes, you blockhead, but there was writing upon it, which is gone. That is what you had to guard."

"Why, look you, captain, as to writing, you see I know nothing, having never been a scholar; but as it was raining all night, it may have been washed out."

"And as it was blowing, I suppose the parchment on which it was written was blown off?"

"No doubt, Herr Kornweiner; you are quite right."

"Come, sir, this is no joking matter. Tell me, at once, who came here last night?"

"Why, two of them came."

"Two of what?"

"Two wizards, or goblins, or worse."

"None of that nonsense for me." The Dacian's eye flashed drunkenly again. "Well, tell me, Arminius, what sort of people they were, and what they did."

"Why, one of them was but a stripling, a boy, tall and thin; who went round the pillar, and I suppose must have taken away what you miss, while I was busy with the other."

"And what of him? What was he like?"

The soldier opened his mouth and eyes, and stared at Corvinus for some moments, then said, with a sort of stupid solemnity, "What was he like? Why, if he was not Thor himself, he wasn't far from it. I never felt such strength."

"What did he do to show it?"

"He came up first, and began to chat quite friendly; asked me if it was not very cold, and that sort of thing. At last, I remembered that I had to run through any one that came near me—"

"Exactly," interrupted Corvinus; "and why did you not do it?"

"Only because he wouldn't let me. I told him to be off, or I should spear him, and drew back and stretched out my javelin; when in the quietest manner, but I don't know how, he twisted it out of my hand, broke it over his knee, as if it had been a mountebank's wooden sword, and dashed the iron-headed piece fast into the ground, where you see it, fifty yards off."

"Then why not you rush on him with your sword, and dispatch him at once? But where is your sword? it is not in your scabbard."

The Dacian, with a stupid grin, pointed to the roof of the neighboring basilica, and said: "There don't you see it shining on the tiles, in the morning light?" Corvinus looked, and there indeed he saw what appeared like such an object, but he could hardly believe his own eyes.

"How did it get there, you stupid booby?" he asked,

The soldier twisted his moustache in an ominous way, which made Corvinus ask again more civilly, and then he was answered:

"He, or it, whatever it was, then without any apparent effort, by a sort of conjuring, whisked it out of my hand, and up where you see it, as easily as I could cast a quoit a dozen yards."

"And then?"

"And then, he and the boy, who came from round the pillar, walked off in the dark."

"What a strange story!" muttered Corvinus to himself;

"yet there are proofs of the fellow's tale. It is not every one who could have performed that feat. But pray, sirrah, why did you not give the alarm, and rouse the other guards to pursue?"

"First, Master Kornweiner, because, in my country, we will fight any living men, but we do not propose to pursue hobgoblins. And secondly, what was the use? I saw the board that you gave into my care all safe and sound."

"Stupid barbarian!" growled Corvinus, but well within his teeth; then added: "This business will go hard with you; you know it is a capital offence."

"What is?"

"Why, to let a man come up and speak to you, without giving the watchword."

"Gently, captain, who says he did not give it? I never said so."

"But did he though? Then it could be no Christian."

"Oh yes, he came up, and said quite plainly, '*Nomen Imperatorum*.'"

"What?" roared out Corvinus.

"*Nomen Imperatorum*."

"'*Numen Imperatorum*' was the watchword," shrieked the enraged Roman.

"*Nomen* or *Numen*, it's all the same, I suppose. A letter can't make any difference. You call me Arminius, and I call myself Hermann, and they mean the same. How should I know your nice points of language?"

Corvinus was enraged at himself; for he saw how much better he would have gained his ends, by putting a sharp, intelligent prætorian on duty, instead of a sottish, savage foreigner.

"Well," he said, in the worst of humors, "you will have to answer to the emperor for all this; and you know he is not accustomed to pass over offences."

"Look you now, Herr Krummbeiner," returned the soldier, with a look of sly stolidity; "as to that, we are pretty well in the same boat," (Corvinus turned pale, for he knew this was true.) "And you must contrive something to save me, if you want to save yourself. It was you the emperor made responsible, for the what-d'ye-call-it?—that board."

"You are right, my friend; I must make it out that a strong body attacked you, and killed you at your post. So shut yourself up in quarters for a few days, and you shall have plenty of beer till the thing blows over."

The soldier went off and concealed himself. A few days, after, the dead body of a Dacian, evidently murdered, was washed on the banks of the Tiber. It was supposed he had fallen in some drunken row; and no further trouble was taken about it. The fact was indeed so: but Corvinus could have given the best account of the transaction. Before, however, leaving the ill-omened spot in the Forum, he had carefully examined the ground, for any trace of the daring act; when he picked up, close under the place of the edict, a knife, which he was sure he had seen at school, in possession of one of his companions. He treasured it up, as an implement of future vengeance, and hastened to provide another copy of the decree.

CHAPTER XV.

EXPLANATIONS.

When morning had fairly broken, crowds streamed, from every side, into the Forum, curious to read the tremendous edict so long menaced. But when they found only a bare board, there was a universal uproar. Some admired the spirit of the Christians, so generally reckoned cowardly; others were indignant at the audacity of such an act; some ridiculed the officials concerned in the proclamation; others were angry that the expected sport of the day might be delayed.

At an early hour the places of public fashionable resort were

*The name of the Emperor.

all occupied with the same theme. In the great Antonian *Therma* a group of regular frequenters were talking it over. There were Scaurus the lawyer, and Proculus, and Fulvius, and the philosopher Calpurnius, who seemed very busy with some musty volumes, and several others.

"What a strange affair this is, about the edict!" said one.

"Say rather, what a treasonable outrage against the divine emperors!" answered Fulvius.

"How was it done?" asked a third.

"Have you not heard," said Proculus, "that the Dacian guard stationed at the Puteal, was found dead, with twenty-seven poignard wounds on him, nineteen of which would have sufficed each by itself to cause death?"

"No, that is quite a false report," interrupted Scaurus; "it was not done by violence, but entirely by witchcraft. Two women came up to the soldier, who drove his lance at one, and it passed clean through her, and stuck in the ground on the other side, without making any wound in her. He then hacked at the other with his sword, but he might as well have struck at marble. She then threw a pinch of powder upon him, and he flew into the air, and was found, asleep and unhurt, this morning, on the roof of the *Æmilian* basilica. A friend of mine, who was out early, saw the ladder up, by which he had been brought down."

"Wonderful!" many exclaimed. "What extraordinary people these Christians must be!"

"I don't believe a word of it," observed Proculus. "There is no such power in magic; and certainly I don't see why these wretched men should possess it more than their betters. Come, Calpurnius," he continued, "put up that old book, and answer these questions. I learnt more, one day after dinner, about these Christians from you, than I had heard in all my life before. What a wonderful memory you must have, to remember so accurately the genealogy and history of that barbarous people! Is what Scaurus has just told us, possible or not?"

Calpurnius delivered himself, with great pompousness, as follows:

"There is no reason to suppose such a thing impossible; for the power of magic has no bounds. To prepare a powder that would make a man fly in the air, it would be only necessary to find some herbs in which air predominates more than the other three elements. Such for instance are pulse, or lentils, according to Pythagoras. These, being gathered when the sun is in *Libra*, the nature of which is to balance even heavy things in air, at the moment of conjunction with Mercury, a winged power as you know, and properly energised by certain mysterious words, by a skilful magician, then reduced to a powder in a mortar made out of an *ærolite*, or stone that had flown up into the sky, and come down again, would no doubt, when rightly used, enable, or force, a person to fly up into the air. It is well-known, indeed, that the Thessalian witches go at pleasure through the clouds, from place to place, which must be done by means of some such charm.

"Then, as to the Christians; you will remember, excellent Proculus, that in the account to which you have done me the honor to allude, which was at the deified Fabius's table, if I remember right, I mentioned that the sect came originally from Chaldaea, a country always famous for its occult arts. But we have a most important evidence bearing on this matter, recorded in history. It is quite certain, that here in Rome, a certain Simon, who was sometimes called Simon Peter, and at other times Simon Magus, actually in public flew up high into the air; but his charm having slipped out of his belt, he fell and broke both his legs; for which reason he was obliged to be crucified with his head downwards."

"Then are all Christians necessarily sorcerers?" asked Scaurus.

"Necessarily; it is part of their superstition. They believe their priests to have most extraordinary power over nature. Thus, for example, they think they can bathe the bodies of people in water, and their souls acquire thereby wonderful gifts, and superiority, should they be slaves, over their masters and the divine emperors themselves."

"Dreadful!" all cried out.

"Then, again," resumed Calpurnius, "we all know what a frightful crime some of them committed last night, in tearing down a supreme edict of the imperial deities; and even suppose (which the gods avert) that they carried their treasons still further, and attempted their sacred lives, they believed that they have only to go to one of those priests, own the crime, and ask for pardon; and, if he gives it, they consider themselves as perfectly guiltless."

"Fearful!" joined in the chorus.

"Such a doctrine," said Scaurus, "is incompatible with the safety of the state. A man who thinks he can be pardoned by another man of every crime, is capable of committing any."

"And that, no doubt," observed Fulvius, "is the cause of this new and terrible edict against them. After what Calpurnius has told us about these desperate men, nothing can be too severe against them."

Fulvius had been keenly eyeing Sebastian, who had entered during the conversation; and now pointedly addressed him.

"And you, no doubt, think so too, Sebastian; do you not?"

"I think," he calmly replied, "that if the Christians be such as Calpurnius describes them, infamous sorcerers, they deserve to be exterminated from the face of the earth. But even so, I would gladly give them one chance of escape."

"And what is that?" sneeringly asked Fulvius.

"That no one should be allowed to join in destroying them, who could not prove himself freer from crime than they. I would have no one rise his hand against them, who cannot show that he has never been an adulterer, an extortioner, a deceiver, a drunkard, a bad husband, father or child, a profligate, a thief. For with being one of these, no one charges the poor Christians."*

Fulvius winced under the catalogue of vices, and still more under the indignant, but serene glance of Sebastian. But at the word "thief," he fairly leapt. Had the soldier seen him pick up the scarf in Fabius's house? Be it so or not, the dislike he had taken to Sebastian, at their first meeting, had ripened into hatred at their second; and hatred in that heart was only written in blood. He had only intensity now to add to that feeling.

Sebastian went out; and his thoughts got vent in familiar words of prayer. "How long, O Lord! how long? What hopes can we entertain of the conversion of this great empire, so long as we find even honest and learned men believing at once every calumny spoken against us; treasuring up, from age to age, every fable and fiction about us; and refusing even to inquire into our doctrines, because they have made up their minds that they are false and contemptible?"

He spoke aloud, believing himself alone, when a sweet voice answered him at his side: "Good youth, whoever thou art that speakest thus, and methinks I know thy voice, remember that the Son of God gave light to the dark eye of the body, by spreading thereon clay; which, in man's hands, would only have blinded the seeing. Let us be as dust beneath His feet, if we wish to become His means of enlightening the eyes of men's souls. Let us be trampled on a little longer in patience; perhaps even from our ashes may come out the spark to blaze."

"Thank you, thank you, Cæcilia," said Sebastian, "for your just and kind rebuke. Whither tripping on so gaily on this first day of danger?"

"Do you not know that I have been named guide of the cemetery of Callistus? I am going to take possession. Pray, that I may be the first flower of this coming spring."

And she passed on singing blithely. But Sebastian begged her to stay one moment.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE WOLF IN THE FOLD.

AFTER the adventures of the night, our youths had not much time for rest. Long before daybreak, the Christians had to be

* See Lucian's address to the judge, upon Ptolemæus's condemnation, in the beginning of St. Justin's Second *Apology* or in Rinnart, vol. v. 120

up, and assemble at their several titles, so as to disperse before day. It was to be their last meeting there. The oratories were to be closed, and divine worship had to begin, from that day, in the subterranean churches of the cemeteries. It could not, indeed, be expected, that all would be able to travel with safety, even on the Sunday, some miles beyond the gate.* A great privilege was, consequently, granted to the faithful, at such times of trouble, that of preserving the blessed Eucharist in their houses, and communicating themselves privately in the morning, "before taking other food," as Tertullian expresses it.†

The faithful felt, not as sheep going to the slaughter, not as criminals preparing for execution, but as soldiers arming for fight. Their weapons, their food, their strength, their courage, were all to be found in their Lord's table. Even the lukewarm and the timid gathered fresh spirit from the bread of life. In churches, as yet may be seen in the cemeteries, were chairs placed for the penitentiaries, before whom the sinner knelt, and confessed his sins, and received absolution. In moments like this, the penitential code was relaxed, and the terms of public expiation shortened; and the whole night had been occupied by the zealous clergy in preparing their flocks for, to many, their last public communion on earth.

We need not remind our readers, that the office then performed was essentially, and in many details, the same as they daily witness at the Catholic altar. Not only was it considered, as now, to be the Sacrifice of Our Lord's Body and Blood, not only were the oblation, the consecration, the communion alike, but many of the prayers were identical; so that the Catholic hearing them recited, and still more the priest reciting them, in the same language as the Roman Church of the catacombs spoke, may feel himself in active and living communion with the martyrs who celebrated, and the martyrs who assisted at, those sublime mysteries.

On the occasion which we are describing, when the time came for giving the kiss of peace—a genuine embrace of brotherly love—sobs could be heard, and bursts of tears; for it was to many a parting salutation. Many a youth clung to his father's neck, scarcely knowing whether that day might not sever them, till they waved their palm-branches together in heaven. And how would mothers press their daughters to their bosom, in the fervor of that new love, which fear of long separation kindled! Then came the communion, more solemn than usual, more devout, more hushed to stillness. "The Body of our Lord Jesus Christ," said the priest to each, as he offered him the sacred food. "Amen," replied the receiver, with thrilling accents of faith and love. Then extending in his hand an *orarium*, or white linen cloth, he received in it a provision of the bread of life, sufficient to last him till some future feast. This was most carefully and reverently folded, and laid in the bosom, wrapped up often in another and more precious cover, or even placed in a gold locket.‡ It was now that, for the first time, poor Syra regretted the loss of her rich embroidered scarf, which would long before have been given to the poor, had she not studiously reserved it for such an occasion, and such a use. Nor had her mistress been able to prevail upon her to accept any objects of value, without a stipulation that she might dispose of them as she liked, that was in charitable gifts.

The various assemblies had broken up before the discovery of the violated edict. But they may rather be said to have adjourned to the cemeteries. The frequent meetings of Torquatus with his two heathen confederates in the baths of Caracalla had been narrowly watched by the caparius and his wife, as we have already remarked; and Victoria had overheard the

plot, to make an inroad to the cemetery of Callistus on the day after publication. The Christians, therefore, considered themselves safer the first day, and took advantage of the circumstance to inaugurate, by solemn offices, the churches of the catacombs, which, after some years' disuse, had been put into good repair and order by the *forerowers*, had been in some places repainted, and furnished with all requisites for divine worship.

But Corvinus, after getting over his first dismay, and having as speedily as possible another, though not so grand, a copy of the edict affixed, began better to see the dismal probabilities of serious consequences, from the wrath of his imperial master. The Dacian was right: he would have to answer for the loss. He felt it necessary to do something that very day, which might wipe off the disgrace he had incurred, before again meeting the emperor's look. He determined to anticipate the attack on the cemetery, intended for the following day.

He repaired, therefore, while it was still early, to the baths, where Fulvius, ever jealously watchful over Torquatus, kept him in expectation of Corvinus's coming to hold council with him. The worthy trio concerted their plans. Corvinus, guided by the reluctant apostate, at the head of a chosen band of soldiers who were at his disposal, had to make an incursion into the cemetery of Callistus, and drive, or drag, thence the clergy and principal Christians; while Fulvius, remaining outside with another companion, would intercept them and cut off all retreat, securing the most important prizes, and especially the Pontiff and superior clergy, whom his visit to the ordination would enable him to recognize. This was his plan. "Let fools," he said to himself, "act the parts of ferrets in the warren; I will be the sportsman outside."

In the meantime Victoria overheard sufficient to make her very busy dusting and cleaning, in the retired room where they were consulting, without appearing to listen. She told all to Cucumio; and he, after much scratching of his head, hit upon a notable plan for conveying the discovered information to the proper quarter.

Sebastian, after his early attendance on divine worship, unable, from his duties at the palace, to do more, had proceeded, according to almost universal custom, to the baths, to invigorate his limbs by their healthy refreshment, and also to remove from himself the suspicion, which his absence on that morning might have excited. While he was thus engaged, the old *capsarius*, as he had had himself rattlingly called in his anteposthumous inscription, wrote on a slip of parchment all that his wife had heard of the intention of an immediate assault, and of getting possession of the holy Pontiff's person. This he fastened with a pin or needle to the inside of Sebastian's tunic, of which he had charge, as he durst not speak to him in the presence of others.

The officer, after his bath, went into the hall where the events of the morning were being discussed, and where Fulvius was waiting, till Corvinus should tell him that all was ready. Upon going out, disgusted, he felt himself, as he walked, pricked by something on the chest: he examined his garments, and found the paper. It was written in about as elegant a latinity as Cucumio's epitaph; but he made it out sufficiently to consider it necessary for him to turn his steps towards the Via Appia, instead of the Palatine, and convey the important information to the Christians assembled in the cemetery.

Having, however, found a fleetier and surer messenger than himself, in the poor blind girl, who would not attract the same attention, he stopped her, gave her the note, after adding a few words to it, with the pen and ink which he carried, and bade her bear it, as speedily as possible, to its destination. But, in fact, he had hardly left the baths, when Fulvius received information that Corvinus and his troop were by that time hastening across the fields, so as to avoid suspicion, towards the appointed spot. He mounted his horse immediately, and went along the high-road; while the Christian soldier, in a by-way, was instructing his blind messenger.

When we accompanied Diogenes and his party through the

* There was one cemetery called *ad sextum Philippi*, which is supposed to have been situated six miles from Rome; but many were three miles from the heart of the city.

† *Ad Uzorem*, lib. ii. c. 5.

‡ When the Vatican cemetery was explored, in 1571, there were found in tombs two small square golden boxes, with a ring at the top of the lid. These very ancient sacred vessels are considered by Bottari to have been used for carrying the Blessed Eucharist round the neck (*Roma Subterranea*, tom. i. fig. 11); and Pellicci confirms this by many arguments *Christiana Eccl. Politia*, tom. iii. p. 20).

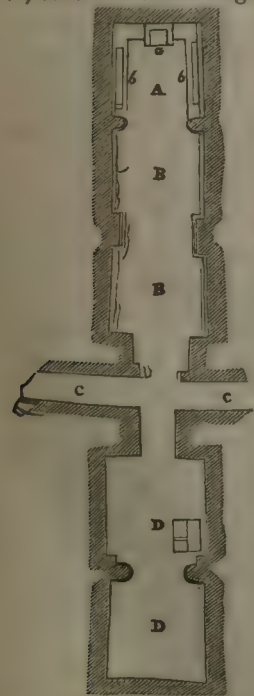
catcombs, we stopped short of the subterranean church, because Severus would not let it be betrayed to Torquatus. In this the Christian congregation was now assembled, under its chief pastor. It was constructed on the principle common to all such excavations, for we can hardly call them edifices.

The reader may imagine two of the *cubicula* or chambers, which we have before described, placed one on each side of a gallery or passage, so that their doors, or rather wide entrances, are opposite one another. At the end of one will be found an *arcosolium* or altar-tomb: and the probable conjecture is that in this division the men under charge of the *ostiarii*,* and in the other the women, under the care of the deaconesses, were assembled. This division of the sexes at divine worship was a matter of jealous discipline in the early Church.

Often these subterranean churches were not devoid of architectural decoration. The walls, especially near the altar, were plastered and painted, and half columns, with their bases and capitals, not ungracefully cut out of the sandstone, divided the different parts or ornamented the entrances. In one instance, indeed in the chief basilica yet discovered in the cemetery of Callistus, there is a chamber without any altar, communicating with the church by means of a funnel-shaped opening, piercing the earthen wall, here some twelve feet thick, and entering the chamber, which is at a lower level, at the height of five or six feet, in a slanting direction; so that all that was spoken in the church could be heard, yet nothing that was done there could be seen, by those assembled in the chamber. This is very naturally supposed to have been the place reserved for the class of public penitents called *audientes* or hearers, and for the catechumens, not yet initiated by baptism.

The basilica, in which the Christians were assembled, when Sebastian sent his message, was like the one discovered in the cemetery of St. Agnes. Each of the two divisions was double, that is, consisted of two large chambers, slightly separated by half-

columns, in what we may call the women's church, and by the flat pilasters in the men's, one of these surfaces having in it a small niche for an image or lamp. But the most remarkable feature of this basilica is a further prolongation of the structure, so as to give it a chancel or presbytery. This is about the size of half each other division, from which it is separated by two columns against the wall, as well as by its lesser height, after the manner of modern chancels. For while each portion of each division has first a lofty-arched tomb in its wall, and four or five tiers of graves above it, the elevation of the chancel is not much greater than that of those *arcosolia* or altar-tombs. At the end of the chancel, against the middle of the wall, is a chair with back and arms cut out of the solid stone, and from each side proceeds a stone bench, which thus occupies the end and two sides of the chancel. As the table of the arched-tomb behind the chair is higher than the back of the throne, and as this is immovable, it is clear that the divine mysteries could not have been celebrated upon it. A portable altar must, therefore, have been placed before the throne, in an isolated position in the middle of the sanctuary: and this, tradition tells us, was the wooden altar of Peter.



PLAN OF SUBTERRANEAN CHURCH IN THE CEMETERY OF ST. AGNES.

A Choir, or chancel, with episcopal chair (a) and benches for the clergy (bb.)

B. Division for the men, separated from the choir by two pillars, supporting an arch.

C. Corridor of the catacomb, affording entrance to the church.

D. Division for the women, with a tomb in it.

Each portion is subdivided by projections in the wall.

* Door-keepers,—an office constituting a lesser order in the Church,

We have thus the exact arrangements to be found in the churches built after the peace, and yet to be seen in all the ancient basilicas in Rome—the episcopal chair in the center of the apse, the presbytery or seat for the clergy on either hand, and the altar between the throne and the people. The Christians thus anticipated underground, or rather gave the principles which directed, the forms of ecclesiastical architecture.

It was in such a basilica, then, that we are to imagine the faithful assembled, when Corvinus and his satellites arrived at the entrance of the cemetery. This was the way which Torquatus knew, leading down by steps from a half-ruinous building, choked up with faggots. They found the coast clear, and immediately made their arrangements. Fulvius, with one body of ten or twelve men, lurked to guard the entrance, and a second all who attempted to come out or go in. Corvinus, with Torquatus and a smaller body of eight, prepared to descend.

"I don't like this underground work," said an old, grey-bearded legionary. "I am a soldier, and not a rat-catcher. Bring me my man into the light of day, and I will fight him hand to hand, and foot to foot; but I have no love for being stifled or poisoned, like vermin in a drain."

This speech found favor with the soldiers. One said, "There may be hundreds of these skulking Christians down there, and we are little more than half a dozen."

"This is not the sort of work we receive our pay for," added another.

"It's their sorceries I care for," continued a third, "and not their valor."

It required all the eloquence of Fulvius to screw up their resolution. He assured them there was nothing to fear; that the cowardly Christians would run before them like hares, and that they would find more gold and silver in the church than a year's pay would give them. Thus encouraged, they went groping down to the bottom of the stairs. They could distinguish lamps at intervals, stretching into the gloomy length before them.

"Hush!" said one, "listen to that voice!"

From far away its accents came softened by distance; but they were the notes of a fresh youthful voice, that quailed not with fear; so clear, that the very words could be caught, as it intoned the following verses:

"Dominus illuminatio mea, et salus mea; quem timebo?"

"Dominus protector vitæ meæ; a quo trepidabo?"*

Then came a full chorus of voices, singing, like the sound of many waters:

"Dum appropriant super me nocentes, ut edant carnes meas; qui tribulant me, inimici, ipsi infirmati sunt et ceciderunt."†

A mixture of shame and anger seized on the assailants as they heard these words of calm confidence and defiance. The single voice again sang forth, but in apparently fainter accents:

"Si consistant adversum me castra, non timebit cor meum."‡

"I thought I knew that voice," muttered Corvinus. "I ought to know it out of a thousand. It is that of my bane, the cause of all last night's curse and this day's trouble. It is that of Pancratius, who pulled down the edict. On, on, my men; any reward for him, dead or alive!"

"But, stop," said one, "let us light our torches,"

"Hark!" said a second, while they were engaged in this operation; "what is that strange noise, as if of scratching and hammering at a distance? I have heard it for some time!"

"And look!" added a third; "the distant lights have disappeared, and the music has ceased. We are certainly discovered."

"No danger," said Torquatus, putting on a boldness which

* "The Lord is my light and salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the protector of my life: of whom shall I be afraid?"

† "While the wicked draw nigh me, to eat my flesh, my enemies that trouble me have themselves been weakened and have fallen."

‡ "If armies in camp shall stand together against me, my heart shall not fear."—Ps. xxvi.

he did not feel. "That noise only comes from those old moles, Diogenes and his sons, busy preparing graves for the Christians we shall seize."

Torquatus had in vain advised the troop not to bring torches, but to provide themselves with such lamps as we see Diogenes represented carrying, in his picture, or waxen tapers, which he had brought for himself; but the men swore they would not go down without plenty of light, and such means for it as could not be put out by a draught of wind, or a stroke on the arm. The effects were soon obvious. As they advanced, silently and cautiously, along the low narrow gallery, the resinous torches crackled and hissed with a fierce glare, which heated and annoyed them; while a volume of thick pitchy smoke from each rolled downwards on to the bearers from the roof, half stifled them, and made a dense atmosphere of cloud around themselves, which effectually dimmed their light. Torquatus kept at the head of the party, counting every turning right and left, as he had noted them; though he found every mark which he had made carefully removed. He was staggered and baulked, when, after having counted little more than half the proper number, he found the road completely blocked up.

The fact was, that keener eyes than he was aware of had been on the look-out. Severus had never relaxed his watchfulness, determined not to be surprised. He was near the entrance to the cemetery below, when the soldiers reached it above; and he ran forward at once to the place where the sand had been prepared for closing the road; near which his brother and several other stout workmen were stationed, in case of danger. In a moment, with that silence and rapidity to which they were trained, they set to work lustily, shovelling the sand across the narrow and low corridor from each side, while well-directed blows of the pick brought from the roof behind, huge flakes of sandstone, which closed up the opening. Behind this barrier they stood, hardly suppressing a laugh as they heard their enemies through its loose separation. Their work it was which had been heard, and which had screened off the lights, and deadened the song.

Torquatus's perplexity was not diminished by the volley of oaths and imprecations, and the threats of violence which were showered upon him, for a fool or a traitor. "Stay one moment, I entreat you," he said. "It is possible I have mistaken my reckoning. I know the right turn by a remarkable tomb a few yards within it; I will just step into one or two of the last corridors, and see."

With these words, he ran back to the next gallery on the left, advanced a few paces, and totally disappeared.

Though his companions had followed him to the very mouth of the gallery, they could not see how this happened. It appeared like witchcraft, in which they were quite ready to believe. His light and himself seemed to have vanished at once. "We shall have no more of this work," they said; "either Torquatus is a traitor, or he has been carried off by magic." Worried, heated in the close atmosphere almost inflamed by their lights, begrimed, blinded, and choked by the pitchy smoke, crest-fallen and disheartened, they turned back; and since their road led straight to the entrance, they flung away their blazing torches into the side galleries, one here and one there, as they passed by, to get rid of them. When they looked back, it seemed as if a triumphal illumination was kindling up the very atmosphere of the gloomy corridor. From the mouths of the various caverns came forth a fiery light which turned the dull sandstone into a bright crimson; while the volumes of smoke above, hung like amber clouds along the whole gallery. The sealed tombs, receiving the unusual reflection on their yellow tiles, or marble slabs, appeared covered with golden or silver plates, set in the red damask of the walls. It looked like a homage paid to martyrdom, by the very furies of heathenism, on the first day of persecution. The torches which they had kindled to destroy, only served to shed brightness on monuments of that virtue which had never failed to save the Church.

But before these foiled bounds with drooping heads had reached the entrance, they recoiled before the sight of a singular

apparition. At first they thought they had caught a glimpse of daylight; but they soon perceived it was the glimmering of a lamp. This was held steadily by an upright, immovable figure, which thus received its light upon itself. It was clothed in a dark dress, so as to resemble one of those bronze statues, which have the head and extremities of white marble, and startle one, when first seen; so like are they to living forms.

"Who can it be? What is it?" the men whispered to one another.

"A sorceress," replied one.

"The *genius loci*,"* observed another.

"A spirit," suggested a third.

Still, as they approached stealthily towards it, it did not appear conscious of their presence: "there was no speculation in its eyes;" it remained unmoved and unscared. At length, two got sufficiently near to seize the figure by its arms.

"Who are you?" asked Corvinus, in a rage.

"A Christian," answered Cæcilia, with her usual cheerful gentleness.

"Bring her along," he commanded; "some one at least shall pay for our disappointment."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE FIRST FLOWER.

CÆCILIA, already forewarned, had approached the cemetery by a different, but neighboring entrance. No sooner had she descended than she snuffed the strong odor of the torches. "This is none of *our* incense, I know," she said to herself; "the enemy is already within." She hastened therefore to the place of assembly, and delivered Sebastian's note; adding also what she had observed. It warned them to disperse and seek the shelter of the inner and lower galleries; and begged of the Pontiff not to leave till he should send for him, as his person was particularly sought for.

Pancratius urged the blind messenger to save herself too. "No," she replied, "my office is to watch the door, and guide the faithful safe."

"But the enemy may seize you."

"No matter," she answered laughing; "my being taken may save much worthier lives. Give me a lamp, Pancratius."

"Why, you cannot see by it," observed he, smiling.

"True; but others can."

"They may be your enemies."

"Even so," she answered, "I do not wish to be taken in the dark. If my Bridegroom come to me in the night of this cemetery, must He not find me with my lamp trimmed?"

Off she started, reached her post, and hearing no noise except that of quiet footsteps, she thought they were those of friends, and held up her lamp to guide them.

When the party came forth, with their only captive, Fulvius was perfectly furious. It was worse than a total failure: it was ridiculous—a poor mouse come out of the bowels of the earth. He rallied Corvinus till the wretch winced and foamed; then suddenly he asked, "And where is Torquatus?" He heard the account of his sudden disappearance, told in as many ways as the Dacian guard's adventure; but it annoyed him greatly. He had no doubt whatever, in his own mind, that he had been duped by his supposed victim, who had escaped into the unsearchable mazes of the cemetery. If so, this captive would know, and he determined to question her. He stood before her, therefore, putting on his most searching and awful look, and said to her sternly, "Look at me, woman, and tell me the truth."

"I must tell you the truth without looking at you, sir," answered the poor girl, with her cheerfullest smile and softest voice: "do you not see that I am blind?"

"Blind!" all exclaimed at once, as they crowded to look at her. But over the features of Fulvius there passed the slightest possible emotion, just as much as the wave that runs, pur-

* The guardian genius of the place.

sued by a playful breeze, over the ripe meadow. A knowledge had flashed into his mind, a clue had fallen into his hand.

"It will be ridiculous," he said, "for twenty soldiers to march through the city, guarding a blind girl. Return to your quarters, and I will see you are well rewarded. You, Corvinus, take my horse, and go before to your father, and tell him all. I will follow in a carriage with the captive."

"No treachery, Fulvius," he said, vexed and mortified. "Mind you bring her. The day must not pass without a sacrifice."

"Do not fear," was the reply.

Fulvius, indeed, was pondering whether, having lost one spy, he should not try to make another. But the placid gentleness of the poor beggar perplexed him more than the boisterous zeal of the gamester, and her sightless orbs defied him more than the restless roll of the toper's. Still, the first thought that had struck him he could not yet pursue. When alone in a carriage with her, he assumed a soothing tone and addressed her. He knew she had not overheard the last dialogue.

"My poor girl," he said, "how long have you been blind?"

"All my life," she replied.

"What is your history? Whence do you come?"

"I have no history. My parents were poor, and brought me to Rome when I was four years old, as they came to pray, in discharge of a vow made in my early sickness, to the blessed martyrs Chrysanthus and Daria. They left me in charge of a pious lame woman, at the door of the title of Fasciola, while they went to their devotions. It was on that memorable day, when many Christians were buried at their tomb, by earth and stones cast down upon them. My parents had the happiness to be of the number."

"And how have you lived since?"

"God became my only Father then, and His Catholic Church my mother. The one feeds the birds or the air, the other nurses the weaklings of the flock. I have never wanted for any thing since."

"But you can walk about the streets freely, and without fear, as well as if you saw."

"How do you know that?"

"I have seen you. Do you remember very early one morning in the autumn, leading a poor lame man along the Vicus Patricius?"

She blushed and remained silent. Could he have seen her put into the poor old man's purse her own share of the alms?

"You have owned yourself a Christian?" he asked negligently.

"Oh, yes! how could I deny it?"

"Then that meeting was a Christian meeting?"

"Certainly; what else could it be?"

He wanted no more; his suspicions were verified. Agnes, about whom Torquatus had been able or willing to tell him nothing, was certainly a Christian. His game was made. She must yield, or he would be avenged.

After a pause, looking at her steadfastly, he said, "Do you know whither you are going?"

"Before the judge of earth, I suppose, who will send me to my Spouse in heaven."

"And so calmly?" he asked in surprise; for he could see no token from the soul to the countenance, but a smile.

"So joyfully rather," was her brief reply.

Having got out all that he desired, he consigned his prisoner to Corvinus at the gates of the Æmilian basilica, and left her to her fate. It had been a cold and drizzling day, like the preceding evening. The weather, and the incident of the night, had kept down all enthusiasm; and while the prefect had been compelled to sit in-doors, where no great crowds could collect, as hours had passed away without any arrest, trial, or tidings, most of the curious had left, and only a few more persevering remained, past the hour of afternoon recreation, in the public gardens. But just before the captive arrived, a fresh knot of spectators came in, and stood near one of the side-doors, from which they could see all.

As Corvinus had prepared his father for what he was to ex-

pect, Tertullus, moved with some compassion, and imagining there could be little difficulty in overcoming the obstinacy of a poor, ignorant, blind beggar, requested the spectators to remain perfectly still, that he might try his persuasion on her, alone, as she would imagine, with him; and he threatened heavy penalties on any one who should presume to break the silence.

It was as he had calculated. Cæcilia knew not that any one else was there, as the prefect thus kindly addressed her:

"What is thy name, child?"

"Cæcilia."

"It is a noble name; hast thou it from thy family?"

"No; I am not noble; except because my parents, though poor, died for Christ. As I am blind, those who took care of me called me *Cæca*,* and then, out of kindness, softened it into Cæcilia."

"But now, give up all this folly of the Christians, who have kept thee only poor and blind. Honour the decrees of the divine emperors, and offer sacrifice to the gods, and thou shalt have riches, and fine clothes, and good fare; and the best physicians shall try to restore thee thy sight."

"You must have better motives to propose to me than these; for the very things for which I most thank God and His Divine Son, are those which you would have me put away."

"How dost thou mean?"

"I thank God that I am poor and meanly clad, and fare not daintily; because by all these things I am the more like Jesus Christ, my only Spouse."

"Foolish girl!" interrupted the judge, losing patience a little; "hast thou learnt all these silly delusions already? at least thou canst not thank thy God, that He has made thee sightless."

"For that, more than all the rest, I thank Him daily and hourly with all my heart."

"How so? dost thou think it a blessing never to have seen the face of a human being, or the sun, or the earth? What strange fancies are these?"

"They are not so, most noble sir. For in the midst of what you call darkness, I see a spot of what I must call light, it contrasts so strongly with all around. It is to me what the sun is to you, which I know to be local from the varying direction of its rays. And this object looks upon me as with a countenance of intensest beauty, and smiles upon me ever. And I know it to be that of Him whom I love with undivided affection. I would not for the world have its splendor dimmed by a brighter sun, nor its wondrous loveliness confounded with the diversities of others' features, nor my gaze on it drawn aside by earthly visions. I love Him too much, not to wish to see Him always alone."

"Come, come! let me have no more of this silly prattle. Obey the emperors at once, or I must try what a little pain will do. That will soon tame thee."

"Pain?" she echoed innocently.

"Yes, pain. Hast thou never felt it? hast thou never been hurt by any one in thy life?"

"Oh, no! Christians never hurt one another."

The rack was standing, as usual, before him; and he made a sign to Catulus to place her upon it. The executioner pushed her back on it by her arms; and as she made no resistance, she was easily laid extended on its wooden couch. The loops of the ever-ready ropes were in a moment passed round her ankles, and arms drawn over the head. The poor sightless girl saw not who did all this; she knew not but it might be the same person who had been conversing with her. If there had been silence hitherto, men now held their very breath; while Cæcilia's lips moved in earnest prayer.

"Once more, before proceeding further, I call on thee to sacrifice to the gods, and escape cruel torments," said the judge, with a sterner voice.

"Neither torments nor death," firmly replied the victim tied to the altar, "shall separate me from the love of Christ. I can offer up no sacrifice but to the one living God; and its ready oblation is myself."

* Blind.

The prefect made a signal to the executioner, and he gave one rapid whirl to the two wheels of the rack, round the windlasses of which the ropes were wound; and the limbs of the maiden were stretched with a sudden jerk, which, though not enough to wrench them from their sockets, as a further turn would have done, sufficed to inflict an excruciating, or more truly, a *racking* pain, through all her frame. Far more grievous was this, from the preparation and the cause of it being unseen, and from that additional suffering which darkness inflicts. A quivering of her features, and a sudden paleness, alone gave evidence of her torture.

"Ha! ha!" the judge exclaimed, "thou feelest that? Come, let it suffice; obey, and thou shalt be freed."

She seemed to take no heed of his words, but gave vent to her feelings in prayer: "I thank Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, that Thou hast made me suffer pain the first time for Thy sake. I have loved Thee in peace; I have loved Thee in comfort; I have loved Thee in joy,—and now in pain I love Thee still more. How much sweeter it is to be like Thee, stretched upon Thy Cross, even than resting upon the hard couch at the poor man's table!"

"Thou triflest with me," exclaimed the judge, thoroughly vexed, "and makest light of my lenity. We will try something stronger. Here, Catulus, apply a lighted torch to her sides."*

A thrill of disgust and horror ran through the assembly, which could not help sympathizing with the poor blind creature. A murmur of suppressed indignation broke out from all sides of the hall.

Cæcilia, for the first time, learnt that she was in the midst of a crowd. A crimson glow of modesty rushed into her brow, her face, neck, just before white as marble. The angry judge checked the rising gush of feeling; and all listened in silence, as she spoke again, with warmer earnestness than before:

"O my dear Lord and Spouse! I have been ever true and faithful to Thee! Let me suffer pain and torture for Thee; but spare confusion from human eyes. Let me come to Thee at once; not covering my face with my hands in shame, when I stand before Thee."

Another muttering of compassion was heard.

"Catulus!" shouted the baffled judge in fury; "do your duty, sirrah! what are you about, fumbling all day with that torch?"

The executioner advanced, and stretched forth his hand to her robe, to withdraw it for the torture; but he drew back, and, turning to the prefect, exclaimed in softened accents,

"It is too late. She is dead?"

"Dead!" cried out Tertullus; "dead with one turn of the wheel? impossible!"

Catulus gave the rack a turn backwards, and the body remained motionless. It was true; she had passed from the rack to the throne, from the scowl of the judge's countenance to her Spouse's welcoming embrace. Had she breathed out her pure soul, as a sweet perfume, in the incense of her prayer? or had her heart been unable to get back its blood, from the intensity of that first virginal blush?†

In the stillness of awe and wonder, a clear bold voice cried out, from the group near the door: "Impious tyrant, dost thou not see, that a poor blind Christian hath more power over life and death, than thou or thy cruel masters?"

"What! a third time in twenty-four hours wilt thou dare to cross my path? This time thou shalt not escape."

These were Corvinus's words, garnished with a furious imprecation, as he rushed from his father's side round the enclosure before the tribunal, towards the group. But as he ran blindly on, he struck against an officer of herculean build,

who, no doubt quite accidentally, was advancing from it. He reeled, and the soldier caught hold of him, saying,

"You are not hurt, I hope, Corvinus?"

"No, no; let me go, Quadratus, let me go,"

"Where are you running to in such a hurry? can I help you?" asked his captor, still holding him fast.

"Let me loose, I say, or he will be gone."

"Who will be gone?"

"Pancratius," answered Corvinus, "who just now insulted my father."

"Pancratius!" said Quadratus, looking round, and seeing that he had got clear off; "I do not see him." And he let him go; but it was too late. The youth was safe at Diogenes's in the Suburra.

While this scene was going on, the prefect, mortified, ordered Catulus to see the body thrown into the Tiber. But another officer, muffled in his cloak, stepped aside and beckoned to Catulus, who understood the sign, and stretched out his hand to receive a purse held out to him.

"Out of the Porta Capena, at Lucina's villa, an hour after sunset," said Sebastian.

"It shall be delivered there safe," said the executioner.

"Of what do you think did the poor girl die?" asked a spectator from his companion, as they went out.

"Of fright, I fancy," he replied.

"Of Christian modesty," interposed a stranger who passed them.

CHAPTER XVIII.

RETRIBUTION.

The prefect of the city went to give his report on the untoward events of the day, and do what was possible, to screen his worthless son. He found the emperor in the worst of moods. Had Corvinus come in his way early in the day, nobody could have answered for his head. And now the result of the inroad into the cemetery had revived his anger, when Tertullus entered the audience-chamber. Sebastian contrived to be on guard.

"Where is your booby of a son?" was the first salutation which the prefect received.

"Humbly waiting your divinity's pleasure outside, and anxious to propitiate your godlike anger, for the tricks which fortune has played upon his zeal."

"Fortune!" exclaimed the tyrant; "fortune, indeed! His own stupidity and cowardice; a pretty beginning, forsooth; but he shall smart for it. Bring him in."

The wretch, whining and trembling, was introduced; and cast himself at the emperor's feet, from which he was spurned, and sent rolling, like a lashed hound, into the midst of the hall. This set the imperial divinity a-laughing, and helped to mollify his wrath.

"Come, sirrah! stand up," he said, "and let me hear an account of yourself. How did the edict disappear?"

Corvinus told a rambling tale, which occasionally amused the emperor; for he was rather taken with the trick. This was a good symptom.

"Well," he said at last, "I will be merciful to you. Lictors, bind your fasces." They drew their axes forth, and felt their edges. Corvinus again threw himself down, and exclaimed:

"Spare my life; I have important information to furnish, if I live."

"Who wants your worthless life!" responded the gentle Maximian. "Lictors, put aside your axes; the rods are good enough for him."

In a moment his hands were seized and bound, his tunic was stripped off his shoulders, and a shower of blows fell upon them, delivered with well-regulated skill; till he roared and writhed, to the great enjoyment of his imperial master.

Smarting and humbled, he had to stand again before him.

"Now, sir," said the latter, "what is the wonderful information you have to give?"

*The rack was used for a double purpose; as a direct torment, and to keep the body distended for the application of other tortures. This of fire was one of the most common.

†There are many instances in the lives of martyrs of their deaths being the fruit of prayer, as in St. Praxedes, St. Cæcilia, St. Agatha, &c.

"That I know who perpetrated the outrage of last night, on your imperial edict."

"Who was it?"

"A youth named Pancratius, whose knife I found under where the edict had been cut away."

"And why have you not seized him and brought him to justice?"

"Twice this day he has been almost within my grasp, for I have heard his voice; but he has escaped me."

"Then let him not escape a third time, or you may have to take his place. But how do you know him, or his knife?"

"He was my schoolfellow at the school of Cassianus, who turned out to be a Christian."

"A Christian presume to teach my subjects, to make them enemies of their country, disloyal to their sovereigns, and contemners of the gods! I suppose it was he who taught that young viper Pancratius to pull down our imperial edict. Do you know where he is?"

"Yes, sire; Torquatus, who has abandoned the Christian superstition, has told me."

"And pray who is this Torquatus?"

"He is one who has been staying some time with Chromatius and a party of Christians in the country."

"Why, this is worse and worse. Is the ex-prefect then, too, become a Christian?"

"Yes, and lives with many others of that sect in Campania."

"What perfidy! what treachery! I shall not know whom to trust next. Prefect, send some one immediately to arrest all these men, and the schoolmaster, and Torquatus."

"He is no longer a Christian," interposed the judge.

"Well, what do I care?" replied the emperor peevishly; "arrest as many as you can, and spare no one, and make them smart well; do you understand me? Now begone, all; it is time for my supper."

Corvinus went home; and, in spite of medicinal applications, was feverish, sore, and spiteful all night; and next morning begged his father to let him go on the expedition into Campania, that so he might retrieve his honour, gratify his revenge, and escape the disgrace and sarcasm that was sure to be heaped on him by Roman society.

When Fulvius had deposited his prisoner at the tribunal, he hastened home to recount his adventures, as usual, to Eurotas. The old man listened with imperturbable sternness to the barren recital, and at last said, coldly,

"Very little profit from all this, Fulvius."

"No immediate profit, indeed; but a good prospect in view, at least."

"How so?"

"Why, the Lady Agnes is in my power. I have made sure, at last, that she is a Christian. I can now necessarily either win her, or destroy her. In either case her property is mine."

"Take the second alternative," said the old man, with a keen glow in his eye, but no change of face; "it is the shorter, and less troublesome way."

"But my honor is engaged; I cannot allow myself to be spurned in the manner I told you."

"You *have* been spurned, however; and that calls for vengeance. You have no time to lose, remember, in foolery. Your funds are nearly exhausted, and nothing is coming in. You must strike a blow."

"Surely, Eurotas, you would prefer my trying to get this wealth by honorable," (Eurotas smiled at the idea coming into either of their minds) "rather than by foul means."

"Get it, get it any way, provided it be the surest and the speediest. You know our compact. Either the family is restored to wealth and splendor, or it ends in and with you. It shall never linger on in disgrace, that is, in poverty."

"I know, I know, without your every day reminding me of the bitter condition," said Fulvius, wringing his hands, and writhing in all his body. "Give me time enough, and all will be well."

"I give you time, till all is hopeless. Things do not look bright at present. But, Fulvius, it is time that I tell you who I am."

"Why, were you not my father's faithful dependant, to whose care he intrusted me?"

"I was your father's elder brother, Fulvius, and am the head of the family. I have had but one thought, but one aim in life, the restoring of our house to that greatness and splendour, from which my father's negligence and prodigality had brought it down. Thinking that your father, my brother, and greater ability for this work, I resigned my rights and gums to him upon certain terms; one of which was your guardianship, and the exclusive forming of your mind. You know how I have trained you, to care nothing about the means, so that our great ends be carried."

Fulvius, who had been riveted with amazement and deep attention on the speaker, shrunk into himself with shame, at this baring of both their hearts. The dark old man fixed his eyes more intently than ever, and went on.

"You remember the black and complicated crime by which we concentrated in your hands the divided remnant of family wealth."

Fulvius covered his face with his hands and shuddered, then said entreatingly, "Oh, spare me that, Eurotas; for heaven's sake spare me!"

"Well, then," resumed the other, unmoved as ever, "I will be brief. Remember, nephew, that he who does not recoil from a brilliant future, to be gained by guilt, must not shrink from a past that prepared it by crime. For the future will one day be the past. Let our compact, therefore, be straightforward and honest; for there is an honesty even in sin. Nature has given you abundance of selfishness and cunning, and she has given me boldness and remorselessness in directing and applying them. Our lot is cast by the same throw,—we become rich, or die, together."

Fulvius, in his heart, cursed the day he came to Rome or bound himself to his stern master, whose mysterious tie was so much stronger than he had known before. But he felt himself spell-bound to him, and powerless as the kid in the lion's paws. He retired to his couch with a heavier heart than ever; for a dark, impending fate never failed to weigh upon his soul, every returning night.

The reader will perhaps be curious to know, what has become of the third member of our worthy trio, the apostate Torquatus. When confused and bewildered, he ran to look for the tomb which was to guide him, it so happened, that, just within the gallery which he entered, was a neglected staircase, out in the sandstone, down to a lower story of the cemetery. The steps had been worn round and smooth, and the descent was precipitous. Torquatus, carrying his light before him, and running heedlessly, fell headlong down the opening, and remained stunned and insensible at the bottom, till long after his companions had retired. He then revived; and was so confused that he knew not where he was. He arose and groped about, till, consciousness completely returning, he remembered that he was in a catacomb, but could not make out how he was alone, and in the dark. It then struck him that he had a supply of tapers about him, and means of lighting them. He employed these, and was cheered by finding himself again in light. But he had wandered from the staircase, of which, indeed, he recollected nothing, and went on, and on, entangling himself more inextricably in the subterranean labyrinth.

He felt sure that, before he had exhausted his strength or his tapers, he should come to some outlet. But by degrees he began to feel serious alarm. One after another of his lights were burnt out, and his vigor began to fail, for he had been fasting from early morning; and he found himself coming back to the same spot, after he had wandered about apparently for hours. At first he had looked negligently around him, and had carelessly read the inscriptions on the tombs. But as he grew fainter, and his hope of relief weaker, these solemn monuments of death began to speak to his soul, in a language that it could not refuse to hear, nor pretend to misunderstand. "Deposited in peace," was the inmate of one; "resting in Christ" was another; and even the thousand nameless ones around them reposed in silent calm, each with

the seal of the Church's motherly care stamped upon his place of rest. And within, the embalmed remains awaited the sound of angelic trumpet-notes, to awaken them to a happy resurrection. And he, in a few more hours, would be dead like them; he was lighting his last taper, and had sunk down upon a heap of mould; but would he be laid in peace, by pious hands, as they? On the cold ground, alone, he should die unpitied, unmourned, unknown. There he should rot, and drop to pieces; and if, in after years, his bones, cast out from Christian sepulture, should be found, tradition might conjecture that they were the accursed remains of an apostate lost in the cemetery. And even they might be cast out, as he was, from the communion of that hallowed ground.

It was coming on fast; he could feel it; his head reeled; his heart fluttered. The taper was getting too short for his fingers, and he placed it on a stone beside him. It might burn three minutes longer; but a drop filtering through the ceiling, fell upon it, and extinguished it. So covetous did he feel of those three minutes more of light, so jealous was he of that little taper-end, as his last link with earth's joys, so anxious was he to have one more look at things without, lest he should be forced to look at those within; that he drew forth his flint and steel, and laboured for a quarter of an hour to get a light from tinder, damped by the cold perspiration on his body. And when he had lighted his remnant of candle, instead of profiting by its flame to look around him, he fixed his eyes upon it with an idiotic stare, watching it burn down, as though it were the charm which bound his life, and this must expire with it. And soon the last spark gleamed smouldering like a glow-worm, on the red earth, and died.

Was he dead too? he thought. Why not? Darkness, complete and perpetual, had come upon him. He was cut off for ever from consort with the living, his mouth would no more taste food, his ears never again hear a sound, his eyes behold no light, or thing, again. He was associated with the dead, only his grave was much larger than theirs; but, for all that, it was as dark and lonely, and closed for ever. What else is death?

No, it could not be death as yet. Death had to be followed by something else. But even this was coming. The worm was beginning to gnaw his conscience, and it grew apace to a viper's length, and twisted itself round his heart. He tried to think of pleasant things, and they came before him; the quiet in the villa with Chromatius and Polycarp, their kind words, and last embrace. But from the beautiful vision darted a withering flash; he had betrayed them; he had told of them; to whom? To Fulvius and Corvinus. The fatal chord was touched, like the tingling nerve of a tooth, that darts its agony straight to the centre of the brain. The drunken debauch, the dishonest play, the base hypocrisy, the vile treachery, the insincere apostasy, the remorseful sacrileges of the last days, and the murderous attempt of that morning, now came dancing like demons hand in hand, in the dark before him, shouting, laughing, jibing, weeping, moaning, gnashing their teeth; and sparks of fire flying before his eyes, from his enfeebled brain, seemed to dart from glaring torches in their hands. He sunk down and covered his eyes.

"I may be dead, after all" he said to himself; "for the infernal pit can have nothing worse than this."

His heart was too weak for rage; it sunk within him in the impotence of despair. His strength was ebbing fast, when he fancied he heard a distant sound. He put away the thought; but the wave of a remote harmony beat again upon his ear. He raised himself up; it was becoming distinct. So sweet it sounded, so like a chorus of angelic voices, but in another sphere, that he said to himself, "Who would have thought that Heaven was so near to hell! Or are they accompanying the fearful Judge to try me?"

And now a faint glimmer of light appeared at the same distance as the sounds; and the words of the strain were clearly heard:

"In pace, in idipsum, dormiam et requiescam."*

* "In peace, in the sepulchre, I will sleep and I will rest." Ps. lxxv.

"Those words are not for me. They might do at a martyr's entombment; they cannot at a reprobate's burial."

The light increased; it was like a dawn glowing into day; it entered the gallery and passed across it, bearing in it, as in a mirror, a vision too distinct to be unreal. First, there came virgins robed and holding lamps; then four who carried between them a form wrapped up in a white linen cloth, with a crown of thorns upon the head; after them the youthful acolyte Tarcisius bearing a censer steaming with perfumed smoke; and, after others of the clergy, the venerable Pontiff himself attended by Reparatus, and another deacon. Diogenes and his sons, with sorrowful countenances, and many others, among whom he could distinguish Sebastian, closed the procession. As many bore lamps or tapers, the figures seemed to move in an unchanging atmosphere of mildest lights.

And as they passed before him, they chanted the next verse of the psalm.

"Quoniam Tu Domine singulariter in spe constituisti me."

"That," he exclaimed, rousing himself up, "that is for me."

With this thought he had sprung upon his knees; and by an instinct of grace, words which he had before heard came back to him like an echo; words suited to the moment; words which he felt that he *must* speak. He crept forward, faint and feeble, turned along the gallery through which the funeral procession was passing, and followed it, unobserved, at a distance. It entered a chamber and lighted it up, so that a picture of the Good Shepherd looked brightly down on him. But he would not pass the threshold, where he stood striking his breast and praying for mercy.

The body had been laid upon the ground; and other psalms and hymns were sung, and prayers recited, all in that cheerful tone and joyous mood of hopefulness, with which the Church has always treated of death. At length it was placed in the tomb prepared for it, under an arch. While this was being done, Torquatus drew nigh to one of the spectators, and whispered to him the question:

"Whose funeral is this?"

"It is the *deposition*," he answered, "of the blessed Cæcilia, a blind virgin, who this morning fell into the hands of the soldiers, in this cemetery, and whose soul God took to Himself."

"Then I am her murderer," he exclaimed, with a hollow moan; and staggering forward to the holy bishop's feet, fell prostrate before him. It was some time before his feelings could find vent in words; when these came, they were the ones he had resolved to utter:

"Father, I have sinned before heaven, and against thee, and I am not worthy to be called thy child."

The Pontiff raised him up kindly, and pressed him to his bosom, saying, "Welcome back, my son, whoever thou art, to thy Father's house. But thou art weak and faint, and needest rest."

Some refreshment was immediately procured. But Torquatus would not rest till he had publicly avowed the whole of his guilt, including the day's crimes; for it was still the evening of the same day. All rejoiced at the prodigal's return, at the lost sheep's recovery. Agnes looked up to heaven from her last affectionate glance on the blind virgin's shroud, and thought that she could almost see her seated at the feet of her Spouse, smiling, with her eyes wide open, as she cast down a handful of flowers on the head of the penitent, the first-fruits of her intercession in heaven.

Diogenes and his sons took charge of him. A humble lodging was procured for him, in a Christian cottage near, that he might not be within the reach of temptation, or of vengeance, and he was enrolled in the class of penitents; where years of expiation, shortened by the intercession of confessors† that is,

* "For Thou, O Lord, singularly hast placed me in hope" Ps. v. 10.

† The penitentiary system of the early Church will be better described in any volume that embodies the antiquity of the second period of ecclesiastical history than of *The Church of the Basilicas*. It is well known, especially from the writings of St. Cyprian, that those who proved weak in penitence, and were subjected to public penance, obtained a shortening of its term—that is, an *indulgence*,—through the intercession of confessors, and of penitents imprisoned for the faith.

future martyrs—would prepare him for full re-admission to the privileges he had forfeited.

CHAPTER XIX.

TWOFOLD REVENGE.

SEBASTIAN'S visit to the cemetery had been not merely to take thither for sepulture the relics of the first martyr, but also to consult with Marcellinus about his safety. His life was too valuable to the Church to be sacrificed so early; and Sebastian knew how eagerly it was sought. Torquatus now confirmed this, by communicating Fulvius's designs, and the motive of his attendance at the December ordination. The usual papal residence was no longer safe; and a bold idea had been adopted by the courageous soldier—the "Protector of the Christians," as his acts tell us he had been authoritatively called. It was to lodge the Pontiff where no one could suspect him to be, and where no search could be dreamt of, in the very palace of the Cæsars.* Efficiently disguised, the holy Bishop left the cemetery, and, escorted by Sebastian and Quadratus, was safely housed in the apartments of Irene, a Christian lady of rank, who lived in a remote part of the Palatine, in which her husband held a household office.

Early next morning Sebastian was with Pancratius. "My dear boy," he said, "you must leave Rome instantly, and go into Campania. I have horses ready for you and Quadratus; and there is no time to be lost."

"And why, Sebastian!" replied the youth, with sorrowful face and tearful eye. "Have I done something wrong, or are you doubtful of my fortitude?"

"Neither, I assure you, but you have promised to be guided by me in all things; and I never considered your obedience more necessary than now."

"Tell me why, good Sebastian, I pray."

"It must be a secret as yet."

"What, another secret?"

"Call it the same, to be revealed at the same time. But I can tell you what I want you to do, and that I think will satisfy you. Corvinus has got orders to seize on Chromatius and all his community, yet young in the faith, as the wretched example of Torquatus has shown us; and, what is worse, to put your old master Cassianus at Fundi to a cruel death. I want you to hasten before his messenger (perhaps he may go himself), and put them on their guard."

Pancratius looked up brightly again; he saw that Sebastian trusted him. "Your wish is enough for me," said he, smiling; "but I would go to the world's end, to save my good Cassianus, or any other fellow-Christian."

He was soon ready, took an affectionate leave of his mother; and before Rome had fully shaken off sleep, he and Quadratus, each with well-furnished saddle-bags on their powerful steeds, were trotting across the campagna of Rome, to reach the less frequented, and safer, track of the Latin way.

Corvinus having resolved to keep the hostile expedition in his own hands, as honorable, lucrative, and pleasant, it was delayed a couple of days, both that he might feel more comfortable about his shoulders, and that he might make proper preparations. He had a chariot hired, and engaged a body of Numidian runners, who could keep up with a carriage at full speed. But he was thus two days behind our Christians, though he, of course, travelled by the shorter and more beaten Appian road.

When Pancratius arrived at the Villa of Statues, he found the little community already excited, by the rumors which had reached it, of the edict's publication. He was welcomed most warmly by all; and Sebastian's letter of advice was received with deep respect. Prayer and deliberation succeeded its perusal, and various resolutions were taken. Marcus and Marcellianus, with their father Tranquillinus, had already gone to Rome for the ordination. Nicostratus, Zoë, and others fol-

lowed them now. Chromatius, who was not destined for the crown of martyrdom, though commemorated, by the Church, with his son, on the 11th of August, found shelter for a time in Fabiola's villa, for which letters had been procured from its mistress, without her knowing the reason why; for he wished to remain in the neighborhood a little while longer. In fine, the villa *ad Statuas* was left in charge of a few faithful servants, fully to be depended upon.

When the two messengers had given themselves and their horses a good rest, they travelled, by the same road as Torquatus had lately trodden, to Fundi, where they put up at an obscure inn out of the town, on the Roman road. Pancratius soon found out his old master, who embraced him most affectionately. He told him his errand, and entreated him to fly, or at least conceal himself.

"No," said the good man, "it must not be. I am already old, and I am weary of my unprofitable profession. I and my servant are the only two Christians in the town. The best families have, indeed, sent their children to my school, because they knew it would be kept as moral as paganism will permit; but I have not a friend among my scholars, by reason of this very strictness. And they want even the natural refinement of Roman heathens. They are rude provincials; and I believe there are some among the elder ones who would not scruple to take my life, if they could do so with impunity."

"What a wretched existence indeed, Cassianus, you must be leading! Have you made no impression on them?"

"Little or none, dear Pancratius. And how can I, while I am obliged to make them read those dangerous books, full of fables, which Roman and Greek literature contain? No, I have done little by my words; perhaps my death may do more for them."

Pancratius found all expostulation vain, and would have almost joined him in his resolution to die; only he had promised Sebastian not to expose his life during the journey. He however determined to remain about the town till he saw the end.

Corvinus arrived with his men at the villa of Chromatius; and early in the morning, rushed suddenly through the gates, and to the house. He found it empty. He searched it through and through, but discovered neither a person, a book, nor a symbol of Christianity. He was confounded and annoyed. He looked about; and having found a servant working in the garden, asked him where his master was.

"Master no tell slave where he go," was the reply, in a latinity corresponding to such a rude phraseology.

"You are trifling with me. Which way did he and his companions go?"

"Through yonder gate."

"And then?"

"Look that way," answered the servant. "You see gate? very well; you see no more. Me work here, me see gate, me see no more."

"When did they go? at least you can answer that."

"After the two come from Rome."

"What two? Always two, it seems."

"One good youth, very handsome, sing so sweet. The other very big, very strong, oh, very. See that young tree pulled up by the roots? He do that as easy as me pull my spade out of the ground."

"The very two," exclaimed Corvinus, thoroughly enraged. "Again that dastardly boy has marred my plans and destroyed my hopes. He shall suffer well for it."

As soon as he was a little rested, he resumed his journey, and determined to vent all his fury on his old master; unless, indeed, he whom he considered his evil genius should have been there before him. He was engaged during his journey, in plotting vengeance upon master and fellow-student; and he was delighted to find, that one at least was at Fundi, when he arrived. He showed the governor his order for the arrest and punishment of Cassianus, as a most dangerous Christian; but that officer, a humane man, remarked that the commission superseded ordinary jurisdiction in the matter, and gave Corvinus full power to act. He offered him the assistance of an

* This is related in the Acts just referred to.

mentioner, and other requisites; but they were declined. Corvinus had brought an abundant supply of strength and cruelty, and his own body-guard. He took, however, a public officer with him.

He proceeded to the school-house when filled with scholars; shut the doors, and reproached Cassianus, who advanced with open hand and countenance to greet him, as a conspirator against the state and a perfidious Christian. A shout arose from the boyish mob; and by its tone, and by the look which he cast around, Corvinus learnt there were many present like himself—young bears' cubs with full-grown hyænas' hearts within them.

"Boys!" he shouted out, "do you love your master, Cassianus? He was once mine too, and I owe him many a grudge."

A yell of execration broke out from the benches.

"Then I have good news for you; here" is permission from the Divine Emperor Maximian, for you to do what you like to him."

A shower of books, writing-tablets, and other school missiles was directed against the master, who stood unmoved, with his arms folded, before his persecutor. Then came a rush from all sides, with menacing attitudes of a brutal onslaught.

"Stop, stop," cried out Corvinus, "we must go more systematically to work than this."

He had reverted in thought to the recollection of his own sweet school-boy days; that time which most look back on from hearts teeming with softer feelings, than the contemplation of present things can suggest. He indulged in the reminiscence of that early season in which others find but the picture of unselfish, joyous, happy hours; and he sought in the recollection what would most have gratified him then, that he might bestow it as a boon on the hopeful youths around him. But he could think of nothing that would have been such a treat to him, as to pay back to his master every stroke of correction, and write in blood upon him every word of reproach, that he had received. Delightful thought, now to be fulfilled!

It is far from our intention to harrow the feelings of our gentle readers, by descriptions of the cruel and fiendish torments inflicted by the heathen persecutors on our Christian forefathers. Few are more horrible, yet few better authenticated, than the torture practised on the martyr Cassianus. Placed, bound, in the midst of his ferocious young tigers, he was left to be the lingering victim of their feeble cruelty. Some, as the Christian poet Prudentius tells us, cut their tasks upon him with the steel points, used in engraving writing on wax-covered tablets; others exercised the ingenuity of a precocious brutality, by inflicting every possible torment on his lacerated body. Loss of blood, and acute pain, at length exhausted him; and he fell on the floor, without power to rise. A shout of exultation followed, new insults were inflicted, and the troop of youthful demons broke loose, to tell the story of their sport at their respective homes. To give Christians decent burial never entered into the minds of their persecutors; and Corvinus, who had glutted his eyes with the spectacle of his vengeance, and had urged on the first efforts at cruelty of his ready instruments, left the expiring man where he lay, to die unnoticed. His faithful servant, however, raised him up, and laid him on his bed, and sent a token, as he had preconcerted, to Pancratius, who was soon at his side, while his companion looked after preparations for their departure. The youth was horrified at what he beheld, and at the recital of his old master's exquisite torture, as he was edified by the account of his patience. For not a word of reproach had escaped him, and prayer alone had occupied his thoughts and tongue.

Cassianus recognized his dear pupil, smiled upon him, pressed his hand in his own, but could not speak. After lingering till morning, he placidly expired. The last rites of Christian sepulture were modestly paid to him on the spot, for the house was his; and Pancratius hurried from the scene, with a heavy heart and a no slight rising of its indignation, against the heartless savage who had devised and witnessed, without remorse, such a tragedy.

He was mistaken, however. No sooner was his revenge ful-

filled than Corvinus felt all the disgrace and shame of what he had done; he feared it should be known to his father, who had always esteemed Cassianus; he feared the anger of the parents, whose children he had that day effectually demoralized, and fleshed to little less than parricide. He ordered his horses to be harnessed, but was told that they must have some more hours' rest. This increased his displeasure; remorse tormented him, and he sat down to drink, and so drown care and pass time. At length he started on his journey, and after baiting for an hour or two, pushed on through the night. The road was heavy from continued rain, and ran along the side of the great canal which drains the Pontine marshes, and between two rows of trees.

Corvinus had drunk again at his halt, and was heated with wine, vexation, and remorse. The dragging pace of his jaded steeds provoked him, and he kept lashing them furiously on. While they were thus excited, they heard the tramp of horses coming fast on behind, and dashed forward at an uncontrollable speed. The attendants were soon left at a distance, and the frightened horses passed between the rees on to the narrow path by the canal, and galloped forward, rocking the chariot from side to side at a reckless rate. The horsemen behind hearing the violent rush of hoofs and wheels, and the shout of the followers, clapped spurs to their horses, and pushed gallantly forward. They had passed the runners some way, when they heard a crash and a plunge. The wheel had struck the trunk of a tree, the chariot had turned over, and its half-drunken driver had been tossed head over heels into the water. In a moment Pancratius was off his horse and by the side of the canal, together with his companion.

By the faint light of the rising moon, and by the sound of his voice, the youth recognized Corvinus struggling in the muddy stream. The side was not deep, but the high clayey bank was wet and slimy, and every time he attempted to climb it, his foot slipped, and he fell back into the deep water in the middle. He was, in fact, already becoming benumbed and exhausted by his wintry bath.

"It would serve him right to leave him there," muttered the rough centurion.

"Hush, Quadratus! how can you say so? give me hold of your hand. So!" said the youth, leaning over the bank, and seizing his enemy by his arm, just as he was relaxing his hold on a withered shrub, and falling back fainting into the stream. It would have been his last plunge. They pulled him out and laid him on the road, a pitiable figure for his greatest foe. They chafed his temples and hands; and he had begun to revive, when his attendants came up. To their care they consigned him, together with his purse, which had fallen from his belt, as they drew him from the canal. But Pancratius took possession of his own pen-knife, which dropped out with it, and which Corvinus carried about him, as evidence to convict him of having cut down the edict. The servants pretended to Corvinus, when he had regained consciousness, that they had drawn him out of the water, but that his purse must have been lost in it, and lay still buried in the deep mud. They bore him to a neighboring cottage, while the carriage was being repaired; and had a good carouse with his money while he slept.

Two acts of revenge had thus been accomplished in one day,—the pagan and the Christian.

CHAPTER XX.

THE PUBLIC WORKS.

Ir, before the edict, the Thermæ of Dioclesian were being erected by the labor and sweat of Christian prisoners, it will not appear surprising, that their number and their sufferings should have greatly increased, with the growing intensity of a most savage persecution. That emperor himself was expected for the inauguration of his favorite building, and hands were doubled on the work to expedite its completion. Chains of

supposed culprits arrived each day from the port of Luna, from Sardinia, and even from the Crimea, or Chersonesus, where they had been engaged in quarries or mines; and were put to labor in the harder departments of the building art. To transport materials, to saw and cut stone and marble, to mix the mortar, and to build up the walls, were the duties allotted to the religious culprits, many of whom were men little accustomed to such menial toil. The only recompense which they received for their labor, was that of the mules and oxen which shared their occupation. Little better, if better, than a stable to sleep in, food sufficient in quantity to keep up their strength, clothing enough to guard them from the inclemency of the season, this was all they had to expect. Fetters on their ankles, heavy chains to prevent their escape, increased their sufferings; and task-masters, acceptable in proportion as they were unreasonable, watched every gang with lash or stick in hand, ever ready to add pain to toil, whether it were to vent their own wanton cruelty upon unresisting objects, or to please their crueler masters.

But the Christians of Rome took peculiar care of these blessed confessors, who were particularly venerated by them. Their deacons visited them, by bribing their guards: and young men would boldly venture among them, and distribute more nourishing food, or warmer clothing to them, or give them the means of conciliating their keepers, so as to obtain better treatment at their hands. They would then also recommend themselves to their prayers, as they kissed the chains and the bruises, which these holy confessors bore for Christ.

This assemblage of men, convicted of serving faithfully their divine Master, was useful for another purpose. Like the stew in which the luxurious Lucullus kept his lampreys ready fattened for a banquet; like the cages in which rare birds, the pens in which well-fed cattle, were preserved for the sacrifice, or the feast of an imperial anniversary; like the dens near the amphitheatre, in which ferocious beasts were fed for exhibition at the public games; just so were the public works the preserves, from which at any time could be drawn the materials for a sanguinary hecatomb, or a gratification of the popular appetite for cruel spectacles, on any occasion of festivity; public stores of food for those fierce animals, whenever the Roman people wished to share in their savage propensities.

Such an occasion was now approaching. The persecution had lingered. No person of note had yet been captured: and something more wholesale was expected. The people demanded more sport; and an approaching imperial birthday justified their gratification. The wild beasts, which Sebastian and Pancratius had heard, yet roared for their lawful prey. *Christianos ad leones* might seem to have been interpreted by them, as meaning "that the Christians of right belonged to them."

One afternoon, towards the end of December, Corvinus proceeded to the Baths of Dioclesian, accompanied by Catulus, who had an eye for proper combatants in the amphitheatre, such as a good dealer would have for cattle at a fair. He called for Rabirius, the superintendent of the convict department, and said to him,

"Rabirius, I am come by order of the emperor, to select a sufficient number of the wicked Christians under your charge, for the honor of fighting in the amphitheatre, on occasion of the coming festival."

"Really," answered the officer, "I have none to spare. I am obliged to finish the work in a given time, and I cannot do so, if I am left short of hands."

"I cannot help that; others will be got to replace those that are taken from you. You must show Catulus and myself through your works, and let us choose what will suit us."

Rabirius, grumbling at this unreasonable demand, submitted nevertheless to it, and took them into a vast area, just vaulted over. It was entered by a circular vestibule lighted from above, like the Pantheon. This led into one of the shorter arms of a cruciform hall of noble dimensions, into which opened a number of lesser, though still handsome, chambers. At each angle of the hall, where the arms intersected one another, a huge granite pillar of one block had to be erected. Two were

already in their places, one was girt with ropes delivered round capstans, ready to be raised on the morrow. A number of men were actively engaged in making final preparations. Catulus nudged Corvinus, and pointed, with his thumb, to two fine youths, who, stripped slave fashion to their waists, were specimens of manly athletic forms.

"I must have those two, Rabirius," said the willing purveyor to wild beasts; "they will do charmingly. I am sure they are Christians, they work so cheerfully."

"I cannot possibly spare them at present. They are worth six men, or a pair of horses, at least, to me. Wait till the heavy work is over, and then they are at your service."

"What are their names, that I may take a note of them? And mind, keep them up in good condition."

"They are called Largus and Smaragdus; they are young men of excellent family, but work like plebeians, and will go with you nothing loth."

"They shall have their wish," said Corvinus, with great glee. And so they had later.

As they went through the works, however, they picked out a number of captives, for many of whom Rabirius made resistance, but generally in vain. At length they came near one of those chambers which flanked the eastern side of the long arm of the hall. In one of them they saw a number of convicts (if we must use the term) resting after their labor. The centre of the group was an old man, most venerable in appearance, with a long white beard streaming on his breast, mild in aspect, gentle in word, cheerful in his feeble action. It was the confessor Saturninus, now in his eightieth year, yet loaded with two heavy chains. At each side were the more youthful laborers, Cyriacus and Sisinus, of whom it is recorded, that, in addition to their own task-work, one on each side, they bore up his bonds. Indeed, we are told that their particular delight was, over and above their own assigned portion of toil, to help their weaker brethren, and perform their work for them.* But their time was not yet come; for both of them, before their crowns, were ordained deacons in the next pontificate.

Several other captives lay on the ground, about the old man's feet, as he, seated on a block of marble, was talking to them, with a sweet gravity, which riveted their attention, and seemed to make them forget their sufferings. What was he saying to them? Was he requiting Cyriacus for his extraordinary charity, by telling him, that, in commemoration of it, a portion of the immense pile which they were toiling to raise, would be dedicated to God, under his invocation, become a title, and close its line of titulars by an illustrious name?† Or was he recounting another more glorious vision, how this small oratory was to be superseded and absorbed by a glorious temple in honor of the Queen of Angels, which should comprise the entire of the superb hall, with its vestibule, under the directing skill of the mightiest artistic genius that the world should ever see?‡ What more consoling thought could have been vouchsafed to those poor oppressed captives, than that they were not so much erecting baths for the luxury of a heathen people, or the prodigality of a wicked emperor, as in truth building up one of the stateliest churches in which the true God is worshipped, and the Virgin Mother, who bore Him incarnate, is affectionately honored?

From a distance Corvinus saw the group; and pausing, asked the superintendent the names of those who composed it. He enumerated them readily; then added, "You may as well take that old man, if you like; for he is not worth his keep, so far as work goes."

"Thank you," replied Corvinus, "a pretty figure he would cut in the amphitheatre. The people are not to be put off with

*See Piazza, on the church of *Santa Maria degli Angeli*, in his work on the Stations at Rome.

†The last cardinal of the extinct title of St. Cyriacus's formed out of part of these Baths, was Cardinal Bembo.

‡Michel Angelo. The noble and beautiful church of *Santa Maria degli Angeli* was made by him out of the central hall and circular vestibule, described in the text. The floor was afterwards raised, and thus the pillars were shortened, and the height of the building diminished by several feet.

decrepit old creatures, whom a single stroke of a bear's or tiger's paw kills outright. They like to see young blood flowing, and plenty of struggling against wounds and blows, before death comes to decide the contest. But there is one whom you have not named. His face is turned from us; he has not the prisoner's garb, nor any kind of fetter. Who can it be?"

"I do not know his name," answered Rabirius; "but he is a fine youth, who spends much of his time among the convicts, relieves them, and even at times helps them in their work. He pays, of course, well for being allowed all this; so it is not our business to ask questions." "But it is mine, though," said Corvinus, sharply; and he advanced for this purpose. The voice caught the stranger's ear, and he turned round to look.

Corvinus sprang upon him with the eye and action of a wild beast, seized him, and called out, with exultation, "Fetter him instantly. This time at least, Pancratius, thou shalt not escape."

CHAPTER XXI.

THE PRISON.

If a modern Christian wishes really to know what his forefathers underwent for the faith, during three centuries of persecution, we would not have him content himself with visiting the catacombs, as we have tried to make him do, and thus learning what sort of life they were compelled to lead; but we would advise him to peruse those imperishable records, the *Acts of the Martyrs*, which will show him how they were made to die. We know of no writings so moving, so tender, so consoling, and so ministering of strength to faith and to hope, after God's inspired words, as these venerable monuments. And if our reader, so advised, have not leisure sufficient to read much upon this subject, we would limit him willingly to one specimen, the genuine Acts of SS. Perpetua and Felicitas. It is true that they will be best read by the scholar in their plain African latinity; but we trust that some one will soon give us a worthy English version of these, and some other similar, early Christian documents. The ones which we have singled out are the same as were known to St. Augustine, and cannot be read by any one without emotion. If the reader would compare the morbid sensibility, and the overstrained excitement, endeavoured to be produced by a modern French writer, in the imaginary journal of a culprit condemned to death, down to the immediate approach of execution, with the unaffected pathos, and charming truthfulness, which pervades the corresponding narrative of Vivia Perpetua, a delicate lady of twenty-one years of age, he would not hesitate in concluding, how much more natural, graceful, and interesting are the simple recitals of Christianity, than the boldest fictions of romance. And when our minds are sad, or the petty persecutions of our times incline our feeble hearts to murmur, we cannot do better than turn to that really golden, because truthful legend, or to the history of the noble martyrs of Vienne, or Lyons, or to the many similar, still extant records, to nerve our courage, by the contemplation of what children and women, catechumens and slaves, suffered, uncomplainingly, for Christ.

But we are wandering from our narrative. Pancratius, with some twenty more, fettered, and chained together, were led through the streets to prison. As they were thus dragged along, staggering and stumbling helplessly, they were unmercifully struck by the guards who conducted them; and any persons near enough to reach them, dealt them blows and kicks without remorse. Those further off pelted them with stones or offal, and assailed them with insulting ribaldry.* They reached the Mamertine prison at last, and were thrust down into it, and found there already other victims, of both sexes, awaiting their time of sacrifice. The youth had just time, while he was being handcuffed, to request one of the captors to in-

form his mother and Sebastian of what had happened; and he slipped his purse into his hand.

A prison in ancient Rome was not the place to which a poor man might court committal; hoping there to enjoy better fare and lodging than he did at home. Two or three of these dungeons, for they are nothing better, still remain; and a brief description of the one which we have mentioned, will give our readers some idea of what confessorship cost, independent of martyrdom.

The Mamertine prison is composed of two square subterranean chambers, one below the other, with only one round aperture in the centre of each vault, through which alone light, air, food, furniture, and men could pass. When the upper story was full, we may imagine how much of the two first could reach the lower. No other means of ventilation, drainage, or access, could exist. The walls, of large stone blocks, had, or rather have, rings fastened into them, for securing the prisoners; but many used to be laid on the floor, with their feet fastened in the stocks; and the ingenious cruelty of the persecutors often increased the discomfort of the damp stone floor, by strewing with broken potsherds this only bed allowed to the mangled limbs, and welting backs, of the tortured Christians. Hence we have in Africa a company of martyrs, headed by SS. Saturninus and Dativus, who all perished through their sufferings in prison. And the acts of the Lyonesse martyrs inform us, that many new-comers expired in the jail, killed by its severities, before their bodies had endured any torments; while, on the contrary, some who returned to it so cruelly tortured that their recovery appeared hopeless, without any medical or other assistance, there regained their health.* At the same time the Christians bought access to these abodes of pain, but not of sorrow, and furnished whatever could, under such circumstances, relieve the sufferings, and increase the comforts, temporal and spiritual, of these most cherished and venerated of their brethren.

Roman justice required at least the outward forms of trial; and hence the Christian captives were led from their dungeons before the tribunal; where they were subjected to an interrogatory, of which most precious examples have been preserved in the proconsular Acts of Martyrs, just as they were entered by the secretary or registrar of the court.

When the Bishop of Lyons, Pothinus, now in his ninetyeth year, was asked, "Who is the God of the Christians?" he replied, with simple dignity, "If thou shalt be worthy, thou shalt know."† Sometimes the judge would enter into a discussion with his prisoner, and necessarily get the worst of it; though the latter would seldom go further with him, than simply reiterating his plain profession of the Christian faith. Often, as in the case of one Ptolomæus, beautifully recited by St. Justin, and in that of St. Perpetua, he was content to ask the simple question, Art thou a Christian? and upon an affirmative reply, proceeded to pronounce capital sentence.

Pancratius and his companion stood before the judge; for it wanted only three days to the *munus*, or games, at which they were to "fight with wild beasts."

"What art thou?" he asked of one.

"I am a Christian, by the help of God," was the rejoinder.

"And who art thou?" said the prefect to Rusticus.

"I am, indeed, a slave of Cæsar's," answered the prisoner; "but becoming a Christian, I have been freed by Christ Himself; and by His grace and mercy, I have been made partaker of the same hope as those whom you see."

Then turning to a holy priest, Lucianus, venerable for his years and his virtues, the judge thus addressed him: "Come, be obedient to the gods themselves, and to the imperial edicts."

"No one," answered the old man, "can be reprehended or condemned who obeys the precepts of Jesus Christ our Saviour."

"What sort of learning and studies dost thou pursue?"

"I have endeavored to master every science, and have tried

* Ruinart, p. 145.

* See the account of St. Pothinus, *Ruinart*, i. p. 145.

† "Si dignus fueris, cognosces." *Id.*

every variety of learning. But finally I adhered to the doctrines of Christianity; although they do not please those who follow the wandering of false opinions."

"Wretch! dost thou find delight in *that* learning?"

"The greatest; because I follow the Christians in right doctrine."

"And what is that doctrine?"

"The right doctrine, which we Christians piously hold, is to believe in one God, the Maker and Creator of all things visible and invisible; and to confess the Lord Jesus Christ the Son of God, anciently foretold by the prophets, who will come to judge mankind, and is the preacher and master of salvation, to those who will learn well under Him. I indeed, as a mere man, am so weak and insignificant to be able to utter any thing great of *His infinite Deity*: this office belongs to the prophets."*

"Thou art, methinks, a master of error to others, and deservest to be more severely punished than the rest. Let this Lucianus be kept in the nerve (stocks) with his feet stretched to the fifth hole.†—And you two women, what are your names and condition?"

"I am a Christian, who have no spouse but Christ. My name is Secunda," replied the one.

"And I am a widow, named Rufina, professing the same saving faith," continued the other.

At length, after having put similar questions, and received similar answers from all the others, except from one wretched man, who, to the grief of the rest, wavered and agreed to offer sacrifice, the prefect turned to Pancratius, and thus addressed him. "And now, insolent youth, who hast the audacity to tear down the edict of the divine emperors, even for thee there shall be mercy, if yet thou wilt sacrifice to the gods. Show thus at once thy piety and thy wisdom; for thou art yet but a stripling."

Pancratius signed himself with the sign of the saving cross, and calmly replied, "I am the servant of Christ. Him I acknowledge by my mouth, hold firm in my heart, *incessantly adore*. This youth which you behold in me has the wisdom of grey hairs, if it worship but one God. But your gods, with those who adore them, are destined to eternal destruction."‡

"Strike him on the mouth for his blasphemy, and beat him with rods," exclaimed the angry judge.

"I thank thee," replied meekly the noble youth, "that thus I suffer some of the same punishment as was inflicted on my Lord."§

The prefect then pronounced sentence in the usual form, "Lucianus, Pancratius, Rusticus, and others, and the women Secunda and Rufina, who have all owned themselves Christians, and refuse to obey the sacred emperor, or worship the gods of Rome, we order to be exposed to wild beasts, in the Flavian amphitheatre."

The mob howled with delight and hatred, and accompanied the confessors back to their prison with this rough music; but they were gradually overawed by the dignity of their gait, and the shining calmness of their countenances. Some men asserted that they must have perfumed themselves, for they could perceive a fragrant atmosphere surrounding their persons.||

CHAPTER XXII.

THE VIATICUM.

A TRUE contrast to the fury and discord without, was the scene within the prison. Peace, serenity, cheerfulness, and joy reigned there; and the rough stone walls and vaults echoed to the chant of psalmody, in which Pancratius was precentor, and in which depth called out to depth; for the prisoners in the lower dungeon responded to those above, and kept

up, the alternation of verses, in those psalms which the circumstances naturally suggested.

The eve of "fighting with," that is being torn to pieces by, wild beasts, was always a day of greater liberty. The friends of the intended victims were admitted to see them; and the Christians boldly took full advantage of the permission to flock to the prison, and commend themselves to the prayers of the blessed confessors of Christ. At evening they were led forth, to enjoy what was called the free supper, that is, an abundant, and even luxurious, public feast. The table was surrounded by pagans, curious to watch the conduct and looks of the morrow's combatants. But they could discern neither the bravado and boisterousness, nor the dejection and bitterness, of ordinary culprits. To the guests it was truly an *agape*, or love-feast; for they supped with calm joyfulness amidst cheerful conversation. Pancratius, however, once or twice, reproved the unfeeling curiosity, and rude remarks, of the crowd, saying, "To-morrow is not sufficient for you, because you love to look upon the objects of your future hatred. To-day you are our friends; to-morrow our foes. But mark well our countenances, that you may know them again in the day of judgment." Many retired at this rebuke, and not a few were led by it to conversion.*

But while the persecutors thus prepared a feast for the bodies of their victims, the Church, their mother, had been preparing a much more dainty banquet for the souls of her children. They had been constantly attended on by the deacons, particularly Reparatus, who would gladly have joined their company. But his duty forbade this at present. After, therefore, having provided as well as possible for their temporal wants, he had arranged with the pious priest Dionysius, who still dwelt in the house of Agnes, to send, towards evening, sufficient portions of the Bread of life to feed, early in the morning of their battle, the champions of Christ. Although the deacons bore the consecrated elements from the principal church to others, where they were only distributed by the titulars, the office of conveying them to the martyrs in prison, and even to the dying, was committed to inferior ministers. On this day, that the hostile passions of heathen Rome were unusually excited by the coming slaughter of so many Christian victims, it was a work of more than common danger to discharge this duty. For the revelations of Torquatus had made it known that Fulvius had carefully noted all the ministers of the sanctuary, and given a description of them to his numerous active spies. Hence they could scarcely venture out by day, unless thoroughly disguised.

The sacred Bread was prepared, and the priest turned round from the altar on which it was placed, to see who would be its safest bearer. Before any other could step forward, the young acolyte Tarcisius knelt at his feet. With his hands extended before him, ready to receive the sacred deposit, with a countenance beautiful in its lovely innocence as an angel's, he seemed to entreat for preference, and even to claim it.

"Thou art too young, my child," said the kind priest, filled with admiration of the picture before him.

"My youth, holy father, will be my best protection. Oh! do not refuse me this great honor." The tears stood in the boy's eyes, and his cheeks glowed with a modest emotion, as he spoke these words. He stretched forth his hands eagerly, and his entreaty was so full of fervor and courage, that the plea was irresistible. The priest took the Divine Mysteries, wrapped up carefully in a linen cloth, then in an outer covering, and put them on his palms, saying:

"Remember, Tarcisius, what a treasure is intrusted to thy feeble care. Avoid public places as thou goest along; and remember that holy things must not be delivered to dogs, nor pearls be cast before swine. Thou wilt keep safely God's sacred gifts?"

"I will die rather than betray them," answered the holy youth, as he folded the heavenly trust in the bosom of his tunic, and with cheerful reverence started on his journey. There was a gravity beyond the usual expression of his years stamped upon his countenance, as he tripped lightly along the

* Acts of St. Justin. Ruinart, p. 129.

† This is mentioned as the extreme possible extension.

‡ *Ib.* p. 56, Acts of St. Felicitas and her sons.

§ p. 220, Acts of St. Perpetua, &c.

|| pp. 219 and 146, Acts of Lyonese Martyrs.

* *Ib.* p. 219.

streets, avoiding equally the more public, and the too low, thoroughfares.

As he was approaching the door of a large mansion, its mistress, a rich lady without children, saw him coming, and was struck with his beauty and sweetness, as, with arms folded on his breast, he was hastening on. "Stay one moment, dear child," she said, putting herself in his way: "tell me thy name, and where do thy parents live?"

"I am Tarcisius, an orphan boy," he replied, looking up smilingly; "and I have no home save one which it might be displeasing to thee to hear."

"Then come into my house and rest; I wish to speak to thee. Oh, that I had a child like thee!"

"Not now, noble lady, not now. I have intrusted to me a most solemn and sacred duty, and I must not tarry a moment in its performance."

"Then promise to come to me to-morrow; this is my house."

"If I am alive, I will," answered the boy with a kindled look, which made him appear to her as a messenger from a higher sphere. She watched him a long time, and after some deliberation determined to follow him. Soon, however, she heard a tumult with horrid cries, which made her pause on her way, until they had ceased, when she went on again.

In the meantime, Tarcisius, with his thoughts fixed on better things than her inheritance, hastened on, and shortly came into an open space, where boys, just escaped from school, were beginning to play.

"We just want one to make up the game; where shall we get him?" said their leader.

"Capital!" exclaimed another; "here comes Tarcisius, whom I have not seen for an age. He used to be an excellent hand at all sports. Come Tarcisius," he added, stopping him by seizing his arm, "whither so fast? take a part in our game, that's a good fellow."

"I can't, Petilius, now; I really can't. I am going on business of great importance."

"But you shall," exclaimed the first speaker, a strong and bullying youth, laying hold of him. "I will have no sulking, when I want anything done. So come, join us at once."

"I entreat you," said the poor boy feelingly, "do let me go."

"No such thing," replied the other. "What is that you seem to be carrying so carefully in your bosom? A letter, I suppose; well, it will not addle by being for half an hour out of its nest. Give it to me, and I will put it by safe while we play." And he snatched at the sacred deposit in his breast.

"Never, never," answered the child, looking up towards heaven.

"I will see it," insisted the other rudely; "I will know what is this wonderful secret." And he commenced pulling him roughly about. A crowd of men from the neighborhood soon got round; and all asked eagerly what was the matter. They saw a boy, who, with folded arms, seemed endowed with a supernatural strength, as he resisted every effort of one much bigger and stronger, to make him reveal what he was bearing. Cuffs, pulls, blows, kicks seemed to have no effect. He bore them all without a murmur, or an attempt to retaliate; but he unflinchingly kept his purpose.

"What is it? what can it be?" one began to ask the other; when Fulvius chanced to pass by, and joined the circle round the combatants. He at once recognized Tarcisius, having seen him at the Ordination; and being asked, as a better-dressed man, the same question, he replied contemptuously, as he turned on his heel, "What is it? Why only a Christian ass, bearing the mysteries."^{*}

This was enough: Fulvius, while he scorned such unprofitable prey, knew well the effect of his word. Heathen curiosity, to see the mysteries of the Christians revealed, and to insult them, was aroused, and a general demand was made to Tarcisius to yield up his charge. "Never with life," was his only reply. A heavy blow from a smith's fist nearly stunned him, while the blood flowed from the wound. An-

other and another followed, till, covered with bruises, but with his arms crossed fast upon his breast, he fell heavily on the ground. The mob closed upon him, and were just seizing him to tear open his thrice-holy trust, when they felt themselves pushed aside, right and left, by some giant strength. Some went reeling to the further side of the square, others were spun round and round, they knew not how, till they fell where they were, and the rest retired before a tall, athletic officer, who was the author of this overthrow. He had no sooner cleared the ground, than he was on his knees, and with tears in his eyes, raised up the bruised and fainting boy, as tenderly as a mother could have done, and in most gentle tones asked him, "Are you much hurt, Tarcisius?"

"Never mind me, Quadratus," answered he, opening his eyes with a smile; "but I am carrying the divine mysteries; take care of them."

The soldier raised the boy in his arms with tenfold reverence, as if bearing, not only the sweet victim of a youthful sacrifice, a martyr's relics, but the very King and Lord of Martyrs, and the divine Victim of eternal salvation. The child's head leaned in confidence on the stout soldier's neck, but his arms and hands never left their watchful custody of the confided gift; and his gallant bearer felt no weight in the hallowed double burden which he carried. No one stopped him, till a lady met him and stared amazedly at him. She drew nearer, and looked closer at what he carried. "Is it possible?" she exclaimed with terror; "is that Tarcisius, whom I met a few moments ago, so fair and lovely? Who can have done this?"

"Madam," replied Quadratus. "they have murdered him because he was a Christian."

The lady looked for an instant on the child's countenance. He opened his eyes upon her, smiled, and expired. From that look came the light of faith; she hastened to be a Christian likewise.

The venerable Dionysius could hardly see for weeping, as he removed the child's hands, and took from his bosom unviolated, the Holy of holies; and he thought he looked more like an angel now, sleeping the martyr's slumber, than he did when living scarcely an hour before. Quadratus himself bore him to the cemetery of Callistus, where he was buried amidst the admiration of older believers; and later the holy Pope Damasus composed for him an epitaph, which no one can read, without concluding that the belief in the real presence of Our Lord's Body in the B. Eucharist was the same then as now:

"Tarcisium sanctum Christi sacramenta gerentem,
Cum male sana manus peteret vulgare profanis;
Ipsæ animam potius voluit dimittere cœlis
Prodere quam canibus rabidis cœlestia membra."^{*}

He is mentioned in the Roman martyrology, on the 15th of August, as commemorated in the cemetery of Callistus; whence his relics were, in due time translated to the church of St. Sylvester in Campo, as an old inscription declares.

News of this occurrence did not reach the prisoners till after their feast; and perhaps the alarm that they were to be deprived of the spiritual food to which they looked forward for strength, was the only one that could have overcast, even slightly, the serenity of their souls. At this moment Sebastian entered, and perceived at once that some unpleasant news had arrived, and as quickly divined what it was; for Quadratus had already informed him of all. He cheered up, therefore, the confessors of Christ; assured them that they should not be deprived of their coveted food; then whispered a few words to Reparatus the deacon, who flew out immediately with a look of bright intelligence.

Sebastian, being known to the guards, had passed freely in,

* Christ's secret gifts, by good Tarcisius borne,
The mob profanely bade him to di-play;
He rather gave his own limbs to be torn,
Than Christ's celestial to mad dogs betray."

Carmen xxi.

See also Baronius's notes to the *Martyrology*. The words "(Christi) cœlestia membra," applied to the Blessed Eucharist, supply one of those casual, but most striking, arguments that result from identity of habitual thought in antiquity, more than from the use of studied or conventional phrases.

* *Asinus portans mysteria*, a Latin proverb.

and out of, the prison daily ; and had been indefatigable in his care of its inmates. But now he was come to take his last farewell of his dearest friend, Pancratius, who had longed for this interview. They drew to one side, when the youth began :

"Well, Sebastian, do you remember when we heard the wild beasts roar, from your window, and looked at the many gaping arches of the amphitheatre, as open for the Christian's triumph?"

"Yes, my dear boy ; I remember that evening well, and it seemed to me as your heart anticipated then, the scenes that await you to-morrow."

"It did, in truth. I felt an inward assurance that I should be one of the first to appease the roaring fury of those deputies of human cruelty. But now that the time is come, I can hardly believe myself worthy of so immense an honor. What can I have done, Sebastian, not indeed to deserve it, but to be chosen out as the object of so great a grace?"

"You know, Pancratius, that it is not he who willeth, nor he that runneth, but God who hath mercy, that maketh the election. But tell me rather, how do you now feel about to-morrow's glorious destiny?"

"To tell the truth, it seems to me so magnificent, so far beyond my right to claim, that sometimes it appears more like a vision than a certainty. Does it not sound almost incredible to you, that I, who this night am in a cold, dark, and dismal prison, shall be, before another sun has set, listening to the harping of angelic lyres, walking in the procession of white-robed Saints, inhaling the perfume of celestial incense, and drinking from the crystal waters of the stream of life? Is it not too like what one may read or hear about another, but hardly dares to think is to be, in a few hours real of himself?"

"And nothing more than you have described, Pancratius?"

"Oh, yes, far more ; far more than one can name without presumption. That I, a boy just come out of school, who have done nothing for Christ as yet, should be able to say, 'Sometime to-morrow, I shall see him face to face, and adore Him, and shall receive from Him a palm and a crown, yea, and an affectionate embrace,'—I feel is so like a beautiful hope, that it startles me to think, it will soon be *that* no longer. And yet, Sebastian," he continued fervently, seizing both his friend's hands, "it is true ; it is true !"

"And more still, Pancratius."

"Yes, Sebastian, more still, and more. To close one's eyes upon the face of men, and open them in full gaze on the face of God ; to shut them upon ten thousand countenances scowling on you with hatred, contempt, and fury, from every step of the amphitheatre, and unclothe them instantly upon that one sunlike intelligence, whose splendour would dazzle or scorch, did not its beams suffound, and embrace, and welcome us ; to dart them at once into the furnace of God's heart, and plunge into its burning ocean of mercy and love without fear of destruction : surely, Sebastian, it sounds like presumption in me to say, that to-morrow—nay, hush ! the watchman from the capitol is proclaiming midnight—that to-day, to-day, I shall enjoy all this !"

"Happy Pancratius !" exclaimed the soldier, "you anticipate already by some hours the raptures to come."

"And do you know, dear Sebastian," continued the youth, as if unconscious of the interruption, "it looks to me so good and merciful in God, to grant me such a death. How much more willingly must one at my age face it, when it puts an end to all that is hateful on earth, when it extinguishes but the sight of hideous beasts and sinning men, scarcely less frightful than they, and hushes only the fiendlike yells of both ! How much more trying would it be to part with the last tender look of a mother like mine, and shut one's ears to the sweet plaint of her patient voice ! True, I shall see her and hear her, for the last time, as we have arranged, to-day before my fight : but I know she will not unnerve me."

A tear had made its way into the affectionate boy's eye ; but he suppressed it, and said with a gay tone.

"But, Sebastian, you have not fulfilled your promise,—your

double promise to me,—to tell me the secrets you concealed from me. This is your last opportunity ; so, come, let me know all."

"Do you remember well what the secrets were?"

"Right well, indeed, for they have much perplexed me. First on that night of the meeting in your apartments, you said there was one motive strong enough to check your ardent desire to die for Christ ; and lately you refused to give me your reason for despatching me hastily to Campania, and joined this secret to the other : how, I cannot conceive."

"Yet they form but one. I had promised to watch over your true welfare, Pancratius : it was a duty of friendship and love that I had assumed. I saw your eagerness after martyrdom ; I knew the ardent temperament of your youthful heart ; I dreaded lest you should commit yourself by some over-daring action, which might tarnish, even as lightly as a breath does finely-tempered steel, the purity of your desire, or tip with a passing blight one single leaf of your palm. I determined, therefore, to restrain my own earnest longings, till I had seen you safe through danger. Was this right?"

"Oh, it was too kind of you, dear Sebastian ; it was nobly kind. But how is this connected with my journey?"

"If I had not sent you away, you would have been seized for your boldly tearing down the edict, or your rebuke of the judge in his court. You would have been certainly condemned, and would have suffered for Christ ; but your sentence would have proclaimed a different, and a civil, offence, that of rebellion against the emperors. And moreover, my dear boy, you would have been singled out for a triumph. You would have been pointed at by the very heathens with honor, as a gallant and daring youth ; you might have been disturbed, even in your conflict, by a transient cloud of pride ; at any rate, you would have been spared that ignominy, which forms the distinctive merit and the special glory, of dying for simply being a Christian."

"Quite true, Sebastian," said Pancratius, with a blush.

"But when I saw you," continued the soldier, "taken in the performance of a generous act of charity towards the confessors of Christ ; when I saw you dragged through the streets, chained to a galley-slave, as a common culprit ; when I saw you pelted and hooted, like other believers ; when I heard sentence pronounced on you in common with the rest, because you are a Christian, and for nothing else, I felt that my task was ended ; I would not have raised a finger to save you."

"How like God's love has yours been to me—so wise, so generous, and so unsparing !" sobbed out Pancratius, as he threw himself on the soldier's neck ; then continued : "Promise me one thing more : that this day you will keep near me to the end, and will secure my last legacy to my mother."

"Even if it cost my life, I will not fail. We shall not be parted long, Pancratius."

The deacon now gave notice that all was ready, for offering up the holy oblation in the dungeon itself. The two youths looked round, and Pancratius was indeed amazed. The holy priest Lucianus was laid stretched on the floor, with his limbs painfully distended in the *catasta* or stocks, so that he could not rise. Upon his breast Reparatus had spread the three linen cloths requisite for the altar ; on them was laid the unleavened bread, and the mingled chalice, which the deacon steadied with his hand. The head of the aged priest was held up, as he read the accustomed prayers, and performed the prescribed ceremonies of the oblation and consecration. And then each one, approaching devoutly, and with tears of gratitude, received from his consecrated hand his share,—that is, the whole of the mystical food.*

Marvellous and beautiful instance of the power of adaptation in God's Church ! Fixed as are her laws, her ingenious love finds means, through their very relaxation, to demonstrate their principles ; nay, the very exception presents only a sublimer application of them. Here was a minister of God, and a dispenser of His mysteries, who for once was privileged to be,

* Such a celebration of the Divine Mysteries, by a priest of this name, at Antioch, is recorded in his Acts. (See Reunart, tom. iii. p. 162, note.)

more than others, like Him whom he represented,—at once the Priest and the Altar. The Church prescribed that the Holy Sacrifice should be offered only over the relics of martyrs; here was a martyr, by a singular prerogative, permitted to offer it over his own body. Yet living, he “lay beneath the feet of God.” The bosom still heaved, and the heart panted under the Divine Mysteries, it is true; but that was only part of the action of the minister: while self was already dead, and the sacrifice of life was, in all but act, completed in him. There was only Christ’s life within and without the sanctuary of that breast.*—Was ever viaticum for martyrs more worthily prepared?

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE FIGHT.

The morning broke light and frosty; and the sun, glittering on the gilded ornaments of the temples and other public buildings, seemed to array them in holiday splendor. And the people, too, soon came forth into the streets in their gayest attire, decked out with unusual richness. The various streams converge towards the Flavian amphitheatre, now better known by the name of the Coliseum. Each one directs his steps to the arch indicated by the number of his ticket, and thus the huge monster keeps sucking in by degrees that stream of life, which soon animates and enlivens its oval tiers over tiers of steps, till its interior is tapestried all round with human faces, and its walls seem to rock and wave to and fro, by the swaying of the living mass. And, after this shall have been gorged with blood, and inflamed with fury, it will melt once more, and rush out in a thick continuous flow through the many avenues by which it entered, now bearing their fitting name of *Vomitoria*; for never did a more polluted stream of the dregs and pests of humanity issue from an unbecoming reservoir, through ill-assorted channels, than the Roman mob, drunk with the blood of martyrs, gushing forth from the pores of the splendid amphitheatre.

The emperor came to the games surrounded by his court, with all the pomp and circumstance which befitted an imperial festival, keen as any of his subjects to witness the cruel games, and to feed his eyes with a feast of carnage. His throne was on the eastern side of the amphitheatre, where a large space, called the *pulvinar*, was reserved, and richly decorated for the imperial court.

Various sports succeeded one another; and many a gladiator killed, or wounded, had sprinkled the bright sand with blood, when the people, eager for fiercer combats, began to call, or roar for the Christians and the wild beasts. It is time, therefore, for us to think of our captives.

Before the citizens were astir, they had been removed from the prison to a strong chamber called the *spoliatorium*, the press-room, where their fetters and chains were removed. An attempt was made to dress them gaudily as heathen priests and priestesses; but they resisted, urging that as they had come spontaneously to the fight, it was unfair to make them appear in a disguise which they abhorred. During the early part of the day they remained thus together encouraging one another, and singing the Divine praises, in spite of the shouts which drowned their voices from time to time.

While they were thus engaged, Corvinus entered, and, with a look of insolent triumph, thus accosted Pancratius:

“Thanks to the gods, the day is come which I have long desired. It has been a tiresome and tough struggle between us who should fall uppermost. I have won it.”

“How sayest thou, Corvinus? when and how have I contended with thee?”

“Always: everywhere. Thou hast haunted me in my dreams; thou hast danced before me like a meteor, and I have tried in vain to grasp thee. Thou hast been my tormentor, my evil genius. I have hated thee; devoted thee to the infernal

gods; cursed thee and loathed thee; and now my day of vengeance is come.”

“Methinks,” replied Pancratius, smiling, “this does not look like a combat. It has been all on one side; for I have done none of these things towards thee.”

“No? thinkest thou that I believe thee, when thou hast lain ever as a viper on my path, to bite my heel, and overthrow me?”

“Where? I again ask.”

“Everywhere, I repeat. At school; in the Lady Agnes’s house; in the Forum; in the cemetery; in my father’s own court; at Chromatius’s villa. Yes, everywhere.”

“And nowhere else but where thou hast named? when thy chariot was dashed furiously along the Appian way, didst thou not hear the tramp of horses’ hoofs trying to overtake thee?”

“Wretch!” exclaimed the prefect’s son, in a fury; “and was it thy accursed steed which, purposely urged forward, frightened mine, and nearly caused my death?”

“No, Corvinus, hear me calmly. It is the last time we shall speak together. I was travelling quietly with a companion towards Rome, after having paid the last rites to our master Cassianus” (Corvinus winced, for he knew not this before), “when I heard the clatter of a runaway chariot; and then, indeed, I put spurs to my horse; and it is well for thee that I did.”

“How so?”

“Because I reached thee just in time: when thy strength was nearly exhausted, and thy blood almost frozen by repeated plunges in the cold canal; and when thy arm, already benumbed, had let go its last stay, and thou wast falling backwards for the last time into the water. I saw thee: I knew thee, as I took hold of thee, insensible. I had in my grasp the murderer of one most dear to me. Divine justice seemed to have overtaken him; there was only my will between him and his doom. It was my day of vengeance, and I fully gratified it.”

“Ha! and how, pray?”

“By drawing thee out, and laying thee on the bank, and chafing thee till thy heart resumed its functions; and then consigning thee to thy servants, rescued from death.”

“Thou liest?” screamed Corvinus; “my servants told me that they drew me out.”

“And did they give thee my knife, together with thy leopard skin purse, which I found on the ground, after I had dragged thee forth?”

“No; they said the purse was lost in the canal. It was a leopard-skin purse, the gift of an African sorceress. What sayest thou of the knife?”

“That it is here, see it, still rusty with the water; thy purse I gave to thy slaves; my own knife I retained for myself; look at it again. Dost thou believe me now? Have I been always a viper on thy path?”

Too ungenerous to acknowledge that he had been conquered in the struggle between them, Corvinus only felt himself withered, degraded, before his late schoolfellow, crumbled like a clot of dust in his hands. His very heart seemed to him to blush. He felt sick, and staggered, hung down his head, and sneaked away. He cursed the games, the emperor, the yelling rabble, the roaring beasts, his horses and chariot, his slaves, his father, himself—every thing and every body except one—he could not, for his life, curse Pancratius.

He had reached the door, when the youth called him back. He turned and looked at him with a glance of respect, almost approaching to love. Pancratius put his hand on his arm, and said, “Corvinus, I have freely forgiven thee. There is One above who cannot forgive without repentance. Seek pardon from Him. If not, I foretell to thee this day, that by whatsoever death I die, thou too shalt one day perish.”

Corvinus slunk away, and appeared no more that day. He lost the sight on which his coarse imagination had gloated for days, which he had longed for during months. When the holiday was over, he was found by his father completely intoxicated: it was the only way he knew of drowning remorse.

* “I live now, not I, but Christ liveth in me.” Gal. ii. 20.

As he was leaving the prisoners, the *lanista*, or master of the gladiators, entered the room, and summoned them to the combat. They hastily embraced one another, and took leave on earth. They entered the arena, or pit of the amphitheatre, opposite the imperial seat, and had to pass between two files of *venatores*, or huntsmen, who had the care of the wild beasts, each armed with a heavy whip, wherewith he inflicted a blow on every one, as he went by him. They were then brought forward, singly or in groups, as the people desired, or the directors of the spectacle chose. Sometimes the intended prey was placed on an elevated platform to be more conspicuous; at another time he was tied up to posts to be more helpless. A favorite sport was to bundle up a female victim in a net, and expose her to be rolled, tossed, or gored by wild cattle.* One encounter with a single wild beast often finished the martyr's course; while occasionally three or four were successively let loose, without their inflicting a mortal wound. The confessor was then either remanded to prison for further torments, or taken back to the *spoliatorium*, where the gladiator's apprentices amused themselves with despatching him.

But we must content ourselves with following the last steps of our youthful hero, Pancratius. As he was passing through the corridor that led to the amphitheatre, he saw Sebastian standing on one side, with a lady closely enwrapped in her mantle, and veiled. He at once recognized her, stopped before her, and taking her hand, affectionately kissed it. "Bless me, dear mother," he said, "in this your promised hour."

"See, my child, the heavens," she replied, "and look up thither, where Christ with His saints expecteth thee. Fight the good fight, for thy soul's sake, and show thyself faithful and steadfast in thy Saviour's love.† Remember him too whose precious relic thou bearest round thy neck."

"Its price shall be doubled in thine eyes, my sweet mother, ere many hours are over."

"On, on, and let us have none of this fooling," exclaimed the *lanista*, adding a stroke of his cane.

Lucina retreated; while Sebastian pressed the hand of her son, and whispered in his ear, "Courage, dearest boy; may God bless you! I shall be close behind the emperor; give me a last look there, and—your blessing."

"Ha! ha! ha!" broke out a fiendish tone close behind him. Was it a demon's laugh? He looked behind, and caught only a glimpse of a fluttering cloak rounding a pillar. Who could it be? He guessed not. It was Fulvius, who in those words had got the last link in the chain of evidence, that he had long been weaving—that Sebastian was certainly a Christian.

Pancratius soon stood in the midst of the arena, the last of the faithful band. He had been reserved, in hopes that the sight of others' sufferings might shake his constancy; but the effect had been the reverse. He took his stand where he was placed, and his yet delicate frame contrasted with the swarthy and brawny limbs of the executioners who surrounded him. They now left him alone; and we cannot better describe him than Eusebius, an eye-witness, does a youth a few years older:

"You might have seen a tender youth, who had not yet entered his twentieth year, standing without fetters, with his hands stretched forth in the form of a cross, and praying to God most attentively, with a fixed and untr trembling heart; not retiring from the place where he first stood, nor swerving the least, while bears and leopards, breathing fury and death in their very snort, were just rushing on to tear his limbs in pieces. And yet, I know not how, their jaws seemed seized and closed by some divine and mysterious power, and they drew altogether back.‡"

Such was the attitude, and such the privilege of our heroic youth. The mob were frantic, as they saw one wild beast after another careering madly round him, roaring and lashing its sides with its tail, while he seemed placed in a charmed circle,

which they could not approach. A furious bull, let loose upon him, dashed madly forward, with his neck bent down, then stepped suddenly, as though he had struck his head against a wall, pawed the ground, and scattered the dust around him, bellowing fiercely.

"Provoke him, thou coward!" roared out, still louder, the enraged emperor.

Pancratius awoke as from a trance, and waving his arms, ran towards his enemy; but the savage brute, as if a lion had been rushing on him, turned round, and ran away towards the entrance, where meeting his keeper, he tossed him high into the air. All were disconcerted except the brave youth, who had resumed his attitude of prayer; when one of the crowd shouted out: "He has a charm round his neck; he is a sorcerer!" The whole multitude re-echoed the cry, till the emperor, having commanded silence, called out to him, "Take that amulet from thy neck, and cast it from thee, or it shall be done more roughly for thee."

"Sire," replied the youth, with a musical voice, that rang sweetly through the hushed amphitheatre, "it is no charm that I wear, but a memorial of my father, who in this very place made gloriously the same confession which I now humbly make; I am a Christian; and for love of Jesus Christ, God and man, I gladly give my life. Do not take from me this only legacy, which I have bequeathed, richer than I received it, to another. Try once more; it was a panther which gave him his crown; perhaps it will bestow the same on me."

For an instant there was dead silence; the multitude seemed softened, won. The graceful form of the gallant youth, his now inspired countenance, the thrilling music of his voice, the intrepidity of his speech, and his generous self-devotion to his cause, had wrought upon that cowardly herd. Pancratius felt it, and his heart quailed before their mercy more than before their rage; he had promised himself heaven that day; was he to be disappointed? Tears started into his eyes, as stretching forth his arms once more in the form of a cross, he called aloud, in a tone that again vibrated through every heart:

"To-day: oh yes, to-day, most blessed Lord, is the appointed day of Thy coming. Tarry not longer; enough has Thy power been shown in me to them that believe not in Thee; show now Thy mercy to me who in Thee believe!"

"The panther!" shouted out a voice. "The panther!" responded twenty. "The panther!" thundered forth a hundred thousand, in a chorus like the roaring of an avalanche.† A cage started up, as if by magic, from the midst of the sand, and as it rose, its side fell down, and freed the captive of the desert.‡ With one graceful bound the elegant savage gained its liberty; and, though enraged by darkness, confinement, and hunger, it seemed almost playful, as it leaped and turned about, frisked and gambolled noiselessly on the sand. At last it caught sight of its prey. All its feline cunning and cruelty seemed to return, and to conspire together in animating the cautious and treacherous movements of his velvet-clothed frame. The whole amphitheatre was as silent as if it had been a hermit's dell, while every eye was intent, watching the stealthy approaches of the sleek brute to its victim. Pancratius was still standing in the same place, facing the emperor, apparently so absorbed in higher thoughts, as not to heed the movements of his enemy. The panther had stolen round him, as if disdainful to attack him except in the front. Crouching upon its breast, slowly advancing one paw before another, it had gained its measured distance, and there it lay for some moments of breathless suspense. A deep snarling growl, an elastic spring through the air, and it was seen gathered up like a leech, with its hind feet on the chest, and its fangs and fore claws on the throat of the martyr.

He stood erect for a moment, brought his right hand to his

* See the Acts of the Martyrs of Lyons, *Ruinart*, vol. i. p. 162 (where will be found the account of the martyrdom of a youth of fifteen), and those of St. Perpetua and Felicitas, p. 221.

† See the Acts of St. Felicitas and her seven sons, *Ruinart*, vol. i. p. 55.

‡ *Hist. Eccles.*, lib. viii. c. 7.

* Euseb. *ibid.* See also St. Ignatius's letter to the Romans, in his Acts, *ap. Ruinart*, vol. i. p. 40.

† The amphitheatre could contain 150,000.

‡ This was an ordinary device. The underground constructions for its practice have been found in the Coliseum.

mouth, and looking up at Sebastian with a smile, directed to him, by a graceful wave of his arm, the last salutation on his lips—and fell. The arteries of the neck had been severed, and the slumber of martyrdom at once settled on his eyelids. His blood softened, brightened, enriched, and blended inseparably with, that of his father, which Lucina had hung about his neck. The mother's sacrifice had been accepted."

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE CHRISTIAN SOLDIER.

The body of the young martyr was deposited in peace on the Aurelian way, in the cemetery which soon bore his name, and gave it, as we have before observed, to the neighboring gate. In times of peace, a basilica was raised over his tomb, and yet stands to perpetuate his honor.

The persecution now increased its fury, and multiplied its daily victims. Many whose names have appeared in our pages, especially the community of Chromatius's villa, rapidly fell. The first was Zœe, whose dumbness Sebastian had cured. She was surprised by a heathen rabble, praying at St. Peter's tomb, and was hurried to trial, and hung with her head over a smoky fire till she died. Her husband, with three others of the same party, was taken, repeatedly tortured, and beheaded. Tranquillinus, the father of Marcus and Marcellianus, jealous of Zœe's crown, prayed openly at St. Paul's tomb, he was taken and summarily stoned to death. His twin sons suffered also a cruel death. The treachery of Torquatus, by his describing his former companions, especially the gallant Tiburtius, who was now beheaded,† greatly facilitated this wholesale destruction.

Sebastian moved in the midst of this slaughter, not like a builder who saw his work destroyed by a tempest, nor a shepherd who beheld his flock borne off by marauders. He felt as a general on the battle-field, who looked only to the victory; counting every one as glorious who gave his life in its purchase, and as ready to give his own should it prove to be the required price. Every friend that fell before him was a bond less to earth, and a link more to heaven; a care less below, a claim more above. He sometimes sat lonely, or paused silently, on the spots where he had conversed with Pancratius, recalling to mind the buoyant cheerfulness, the graceful thoughts, and the unconscious virtue of the amiable and comely youth. But he never felt as if they were more separated, than when he sent him on his expedition to Campania. He had redeemed his pledge to him; and now it was soon to be his own turn. He knew it well; he felt the grace of martyrdom, swelling in his breast, and in tranquil certainty he awaited its hour. His preparation was simple: whatever he had of value he distributed to the poor; and he settled his property, by sale, beyond the reach of confiscation.

Fulvius had picked up his fair share of Christian spoils; but, on the whole, he had been disappointed. He had not been obliged to ask for assistance from the emperor, whose presence he avoided; but he had put nothing by, he was not getting rich. Every evening he had to bear the reproachful and scornful interrogatory of Eurotas on the day's success. Now, however, he told his stern master—for such he had become—that he was going to strike at higher game, the emperor's favorite officer, who must have made a large fortune in the service.

He had not long to wait for his opportunity. On the 9th of January, a court was held, attended, of course, by all aspirants for favors, or fearers of imperial wrath. Fulvius was there, and as usual, met with a cold reception. But after bearing silently the muttered curses of the royal brute, he boldly advanced, dropped on one knee and thus addressed him:

* The martyr Saturnus, torn by a leopard, and about to die, addressed the soldier Pudens, not yet a Christian, in words of exhortation; then asked him for the ring on his finger, dipped it in his own blood, and gave it back, "leaving him the inheritance of that pledge, and the memorial of his blood." *Ap. Ruinart. vol. i. p. 233.*

† He is commemorated on the 11th of August, with his father Chromatius, as has been already observed.

"Sire, your divinity has often reproached me with having made, by my discoveries, but poor return for your gracious countenance and liberal subsidies. But now I have found out the foulest of plots, and the basest of ingratitude, in immediate contact with your divine person."

"What dost thou mean, booby?" asked impatiently the tyrant. "Speak at once, or I'll have the words pulled out of thy throat by an iron hook."

Fulvius rose, and directing his hand, in accompaniment to his words, said with a bitter blandness of tone: "Sebastian is a Christian."

The emperor started from his throne in fury.

"Thou liest, villain! Thou shalt prove thy words, or thou shalt die such a piecemeal death as no Christian dog ever endured."

"I have sufficient proof recorded here," he replied, producing a parchment, and offering it, kneeling.

The emperor was about to make angry answer, when, to his utter amazement, Sebastian, with unruffled looks and noble mien, stood before him, and in the calmest accents said:

"My liege, I spare you all trouble of proof. I am a Christian, and I glory in the name."

As Maximian, a rude though clever soldier, without education, could hardly when calm express himself in decent Latin, when he was in a passion his language was composed of broken sentences, mingled with every vulgar and coarse epithet. In this state he was now; and he poured out on Sebastian a torrent of abuse, in which he reproached him with every crime, and called him by every opprobrious name, within his well-stocked repertory of vituperation. The two crimes, however, on which he rung his loudest changes, were ingratitude and treachery. He had nursed, he said, a viper in his bosom, a scorpion, an evil demon; and he only wondered he was still alive.

The Christian officer stood the volley, as intrepidly as ever he had borne the enemy's assault, on the field of battle.

"Listen to me, my royal master," he replied, "perhaps for the last time. I have said that I am a Christian; and in this you have had the best pledge of your security."

"How do you mean, ungrateful man?"

"Thus, noble emperor: that if you want a body-guard around you of men who will spill their last drop of life's blood for you, go to the prison and take the Christians from the stocks on the floor, and from the fetter-rings on the walls; send to the courts and bear away the mutilated confessors from the rack and gridiron; issue orders to the amphitheatres, and snatch the mangled half that lives, from the jaws of tigers; restore them to such shape as yet they are capable of, put weapons into their hands, and place them around you; and in this maimed and ill-favored host there will be more fidelity, more loyalty, more daring for you, than all your Dacian and Pannonian legions. You have taken half their blood from them, and they will give you willingly the other half."

"Folly and madness!" returned the sneering savage. "I would sooner surround myself with wolves than with Christians. Your treachery proves enough for me."

"And what would have prevented me at any time from acting the traitor, if I had been one? Have I not had access to your royal person by night as by day; and have I proved a traitor? No, emperor, none has ever been more faithful than I to you. But I have another, and a higher Lord to serve; one who will judge us both; and His laws I must obey rather than yours."

"And why have you, like a coward, concealed your religion? To escape, perhaps, the bitter death you have deserved!"

"No, siré; no more coward than traitor. No one better than yourself knows that I am neither. So long as I could do any good to my brethren, I refused not to live amidst their carnage and my afflictions. But hope had at last died within me; and I thank Fulvius with all my heart, for having, by his accusation, spared me the embarrassment of choice between seeking death or enduring life."

"I will decide that point for you. Death is your award:

and a slow lingering one it shall be. But," he added, in a lower tone, as if speaking to himself, "this must not get out. All must be done quietly at home, or treachery will spread. Here, Quadratus, take your Christian tribune under arrest. Do you hear, dolt? Why do you not move?"

"Because I too am a Christian!"

Another burst of fury, another storm of vile language, which ended in the stout centurion's being ordered at once to execution. But Sebastian was to be differently dealt with.

"Order Hyphax to come hither," roared the tyrant. In a few minutes, a tall, half-naked Numidian made his appearance. A bow of immense length, a gaily-painted quiver of arrows, and a short broad-sword, were at once the ornaments and weapons of the captain of the African archers. He stood erect before the emperor, like a handsome bronze statue, with bright enamelled eyes.

"Hyphax, I have a job for you to-morrow morning. It must be well done," said the emperor.

Perfectly, sire," replied the dusky chief, with a grin which showed another set of enamels in his face.

"You see the captain Sebastian?" The negro bowed assent. "He turns out to be a Christian!"

If Hyphax had been on his native soil, and had trodden suddenly on a hooded asp or a scorpion's nest, he could not have started more. The thought of being so near a Christian—to him who worshipped every abomination, believed every absurdity, practised every lewdness, committed any atrocity!

Maximian proceeded, and Hyphax kept time to every member of his sentences by a nod, and what he meant to be a smile;—it was hardly an earthly one.

"You will take Sebastian to your quarters; and early to-morrow morning—not this evening, mind, for I know that by this time of day you are all drunk—but to-morrow morning, when your hands are steady, you will tie him to a tree in the grove of Adonis, and you will slowly shoot him to death. Slowly, mind; none of your fine shots straight through the heart or the brain, but plenty of arrows, till he die exhausted by pain and loss of blood. Do you understand me? Then take him off at once. And mind, silence; or else—"

CHAPTER XXV.

THE RESCUE.

IN spite of every attempt at concealment, the news was soon spread among all connected with the court, that Sebastian had been discovered to be a Christian, and was to be shot to death on the morrow. But on none did the double intelligence make such an impression as on Fabiola.

Sebastian a Christian! she said to herself; the noblest, purest, wisest of Rome's nobility a member of that vile, stupid sect? Impossible! Yet, the fact seems certain.

Have I, then, been deceived? Was he not that which he seemed? Was he a mean impostor, who affected virtue, but was secretly a libertine? Impossible, too! Yes, this was indeed impossible! She had certain proofs of it. He knew that he might have had her hand and a fortune, for the asking; and had acted most generously, and most delicately towards her. He was what he seemed, that she was sure—not gilded but gold.

Then how account for this phenomenon, of a Christian being all that was good, virtuous, amiable?

One solution never occurred to Fabiola's mind, that he was all this *because* he was a Christian. She only saw the problem in another form; how could he be all that he was, *in spite* of being a Christian?

She turned it variously in her mind, in vain. Then it came to her thought thus. Perhaps, after all, good old Chromatius was right, and Christianity may not be what I have fancied; and I ought to have inquired more about it. I am sure Sebastian never did the horrible things imputed to Christians. Yet every body charges them with them.

Might there not be a more refined form of this religion, and a more grovelling one; just as she knew there was in her own sect, Epicureanism? one coarse, material, wallowing in the very mire of sensualism; the other refined, sceptical, and reflective. Sebastian would belong to the higher class, and despise and loathe the superstitious and vices of the commoner Christians. Such a hypothesis might be tenable; but it was hard to reconcile to her intellect, how a man like that noble soldier could, any way, have belonged to that hated race. And yet he was ready to die for their faith! As to Zöe and the others, she had heard nothing; for she had only returned the day before from a journey made into Campania, to arrange her father's affairs.

"What a pity, she thought, that she had not talked more to Sebastian on such subjects! But it was now too late; to-morrow morning he would be no more. This second thought came with the sharp pang of a shaft shot into her heart. She felt as if she personally were about to suffer a loss, as if Sebastian's fate were going to fall on some one closely bound to her; by some secret and mysterious tie.

Her thoughts grew darker and sadder, as she dwelt on these ideas, amidst the deepening gloom. She was suddenly disturbed by the entrance of a slave with a light. It was Afra, the black servant, who came to prepare her mistress's evening repast, which she wished to take alone. While busy with her arrangements, she said, "Have you heard the news, madam?"

"What news?"

"Only that Sebastian is going to be shot with arrows to-morrow morning. What a pity; he was such a handsome youth!"

"Be silent, Afra; unless you have some information to give me on the subject."

"Oh, of course, my mistress; and my information is indeed very astonishing. Do you know that he turns out to be one of those wretched Christians?"

"Hold your peace, I pray you; and do not prate any more about what you do not understand."

"Certainly not, if you so wish it; I suppose his fate is quite a matter of indifference to you, madam. It certainly is to *me*. He won't be the first officer that my countrymen have shot. Many they have killed, and some they have saved. But of course that was all chance."

There was a significance in her words and tones, which did not escape the quick ear and mind of Fabiola. She looked up, for the first time, and fixed her eyes searchingly on her maid's swarthy face. There was no emotion in it; she was placing a flagon of wine upon the table, just as if she had not spoken. At length the lady said to her:

"Afra, what do you mean?"

"Oh, nothing, nothing. What can a poor slave know? Still more, what can she do?"

"Come, come, you meant, by your words, something that I must know."

The slave came round the table, close to the couch on which Fabiola rested, looked behind her, and around her, then whispered, "Do you want Sebastian's life saved?"

Fabiola almost leaped up, as she replied, "Certainly."

The servant put her finger to her lip, to enforce silence, and said, "It will cost dear."

"Name your price."

"A hundred *sestertia*,* and my liberty."

"I accept your terms; but what is my security for them?"

"They shall be binding only, if twenty-four hours after the execution, he is still alive."

"Agreed; and what is yours?"

"Your word, lady."

"Go, Afra, lose not a moment."

"There is no hurry," quietly replied the slave, as she completed, unfurried, the preparations for supper.

She then proceeded at once to the palace, and to the Mauritanian quarters, and went in directly to the commander.

* About \$4000.

"What dost thou want, Jubala," he said, "at this hour? There is no festival to-night."

"I know, Hyphax; but I have important business with thee."

"What is it about?"

"About thee, about myself, and about thy prisoner."

"Look at *him* there," said the barbarian, pointing across the court, which his door commanded. You would not think that *he* is going to be shot to-morrow. See how soundly he sleeps. He could not do so better, if he were going to be married instead."

"As thou and I, Hyphax, intend to be the next day."

"Come, not quite so fast; there are certain conditions to be fulfilled first."

"Well, what are they?"

"First, thy manumission. I cannot marry a slave."

"That is secured."

"Secondly, a dowry, a good dowry, mind; for I never wanted money more than now."

"That is safe too. How much dost thou expect?"

"Certainly not less than three hundred pounds."*

"I bring thee six hundred."

"Excellent! where didst thou get all this cash? Whom hast thou robbed? whom hast thou poisoned, my admirable priestess? Why wait till *after* to-morrow? Let it be to-morrow, to-night, if it please thee."

"Be quiet now, Hyphax; the money is all lawful gain; but it has its conditions, too. I said I came to speak about the prisoner also."

"Well, what has he to do with our approaching nuptials?"

"A great deal."

"What now?"

"He must not die."

The captain looked at her with a mixture of fury and stupidity. He seemed on the point of laying violent hands on her; but she stood intrepid and unmoved before him, and seemed to command him by the strong fascination of her eye, as one of the serpents of their native land might do a vulture.

"Art mad?" he at last exclaimed; "thou mightest as well at once ask for my head. If thou hadst seen the emperor's face when he issued his orders, thou wouldst have known he will have no trifling with him here."

"Pshaw! pshaw! man; of course the prisoner will appear dead, and will be reported as dead."

"And if he finally recover?"

"His fellow-Christians will take care to keep him out of the way."

"Didst thou say twenty-four hours alive? I wish thou hadst made it twelve."

"Well, but I know that thou canst calculate close. Let him die in the twenty-fifth hour, for what I care."

"It is impossible, Jubala, impossible; he is too important a person."

"Very well, then; there is an end to our bargain. The money is given only on this condition. Six hundred pounds thrown away!" And she turned off to go.

"Stay, stay!" said Hyphax, eagerly; the demon of covetousness coming uppermost. "Let us see. Why, my fellows will consume half the money, in bribes and feasting."

"Well, I have two hundred more in reserve for that."

"Sayest thou so, my princess, my sorceress, my charming demon? But that will be too much for my scoundrels. We will give them half, and add the other half—to our marriage-settlements, shan't we?"

"As it pleases thee, provided the thing is done according to my proposal."

"It is a bargain, then. He shall live twenty-four hours; and after that, we will have a glorious wedding."

Sebastian, in the meantime, was unconscious of these amiable negotiations for his safety; for, like Peter between two guards, he was slumbering soundly by the wall of the court. Fatigued with his day's work, he had enjoyed the rare advan-

tage of retiring early to rest; and the marble pavement was a good enough soldier's bed. But after a few hours' repose, he awoke refreshed; and now that all was hushed, he silently rose, and with outstretched arms, gave himself up to prayer.

The martyr's prayer is not a preparation for death; for his is a death that needs no preparation. The soldier who suddenly declares himself a Christian, bends down his head, and mingles his blood with that of the confessor, whom he had come to execute; or the friend, of unknown name, who salutes the martyr going to death, is seized, and made to bear him willing company,* is as prepared for martyrdom as he who has passed months in prison engaged in prayer. It is not a cry, therefore, for the forgiveness of past sin; for there is a consciousness of that perfect love, which sendeth out fear, an inward assurance of that highest grace, which is incompatible with sin.

Nor in Sebastian was it a prayer for courage or strength; for the opposite feeling, which could suggest it, was unknown to him. It never entered into his mind to doubt, that as he had faced death intrepidly for his earthly sovereign on the battle-field, so he should meet it joyfully for his heavenly Lord, in any place.

His prayer, then, till morning, was a gladsome hymn of glory and honor to the King of kings, a joining with the seraph's glowing eyes, and ever-shaking wings, in restless homage.

Then when the stars in the bright heavens caught his eyes, he challenged them as wakeful sentinels like himself, to exchange the watchword of Divine praises; and as the night-wind rustled in the leafless trees of the neighboring court of Adonis, he bade its wayward music compose itself, and its rude harping upon the vibrating boughs form softer hymns,—the only ones that earth could utter in its winter night-hours.

Now burst on him the thrilling thought that the morning hour approached, for the cock had crowed; and he would soon hear those branches murmuring over to him the sharp whistle of flying arrows, unerring in their aim. And he offered himself gladly to their sharp tongues, hissing as the serpent's to drink his blood. He offered himself as an oblation for God's honor, and for the appeasing of His wrath. He offered himself particularly for the afflicted Church, and prayed that his death might mitigate her sufferings.

And then his thoughts rose higher, from the earthly to the celestial Church; soaring like the eagle from the highest pinnacle of the mountain-peak, towards the sun. Clouds have rolled away, and the blue embroidered veil of morning is rent in twain, like the sanctuary's, and he sees quite into its revealed depths; far, far inwards, beyond senates of saints and legions of angels, to what Stephen saw of inmost and intensest glory. And now his hymn was silent; harmonies came to him, too sweet and perfect to brook the jarring of a terrestrial voice; they came to him requiring no return; for they brought heaven into his soul; and what could he give back? It was as a fountain of purest refreshment, more like gushing light than water, flowing from the foot of the Lamb, and poured into his heart, which could only be passive, and receive the gift. Yet in its sparkling bounds, as it rippled along towards him, he could see the countenance now of one, and then of another of the happy friends who had gone before him; as if they were drinking, and bathing, and disporting, and plunging, and dissolving themselves in those living waters.

His countenance was glowing as with the very reflection of the vision, and the morning dawn just brightening (oh, what a dawn that is!), caught his face as he stood up, with his arms in a cross, opposite the east; so that when Hyphax opened his door and saw him, he could have crept across the court and worshipped him on his face.

Sebastian awoke as from a trance; and the chink of sesterces sounded in the mental ears of Hyphax; so he set scientifically about earning them. He picked out of his troop of a hundred, five marksmen, who could split a flying arrow with a fletcher one, called them into his room, told them their reward, concealing his own share, and arranged how the execution was to be managed. As to the body, Christians had already secretly

* The Cardinal gave the equivalents in English money, as more intelligible.

* Called thence St. Adauctus.

offered a large additional sum for its delivery, and two slaves were to wait outside to receive it. Among his own followers he could fully depend on secrecy.

Sebastian was conducted into the neighbouring court of the palace, which separated the quarters of these African arches from his own dwelling. It was planted with rows of trees, and consecrated to Adonis. He walked cheerfully in the midst of his executioners, followed by the whole band, who were alone allowed to be spectators, as they would have been of an ordinary exhibition of good archery. The officer was stripped and bound to a tree, while the chosen five took their stand opposite, cool and collected. It was at best a desolate sort of death. Not a friend, not a sympathiser near; not one fellow-Christian to bear his farewell to the faithful, or to record for them his last accents, and the constancy of his end. To stand in the middle of the crowded amphitheatre, with a hundred thousand witnesses of Christian constancy, to see the encouraging looks of many, and hear the whispered blessings of a few loving acquaintances, had something cheering, and almost inspiring in it; it lent at least the feeble aid of human emotions, to the more powerful sustainment of grace. The very shout of an insulting multitude put a strain upon natural courage, as the hunter's cry only nerves the stag at bay. But this dead and silent scene, at dawn of day, shut up in a court of a house; this being, with most unfeeling indifference tied up, like a truss of hay, or a stuffed figure, to be coolly aimed at, according to the tyrant's orders; this being alone in the midst of a horde of swarthy savages, whose very language was strange, uncouth, and unintelligible; but who were no doubt uttering their rude jokes and laughing, as men do before a match or a game, which they are going to enjoy; all this had more the appearance of a piece of cruelty, about to be acted in a gloomy forest by banditti, than open and glorious confession of Christ's name: it looked and felt more like assassination than martyrdom.

But Sebastian cared not for all this. Angels looked over the wall upon him; and the rising sun, which dazzled his eyes, but made him a clearer mark for his bowmen, shone not more brightly on him, than did the countenance of the only Witness he cared to have of suffering endured for His sake.

The first Moor drew his bow-string to his ear, and an arrow trembled in the flesh of Sebastian. Each chosen marksman followed in turn; and shouts of applause accompanied each hit, so cleverly approaching, yet avoiding, according to the imperial order, every vital part. And so the game went on; everybody laughing and brawling, and jeering, and enjoying it, without a particle of feeling for the now drooping frame, painted with blood: * all in sport, except the martyr, to whom all was sober earnest—each sharp pang, the enduring smart, the exhaustion, the weariness, the knotty bonds, the constrained attitude! Oh! but earnest too was the steadfast heart, the unfiring spirit, the unwavering faith, the unruffled patience, the unsated love of suffering for his Lord. Earnest was the prayer, earnest the gaze of the eye on heaven, earnest the listening of the ear for the welcoming strain of the heavenly porters, as they should open the gate.

It was indeed, a dreary death; yet this was not the worst. After all, death came not; the golden gates remained unbarred; the martyr in heart, still reserved for greater glory even upon earth, found himself, not suddenly translated from death to life, but sunk into unconsciousness in the lap of angels. His tormentors saw when they had reached their intended measure; they cut the cords that bound him; and Sebastian fell exhausted, and to all appearance dead, upon the carpet of blood which he had spread for himself on the pavement. Did he lie, like a noble warrior, as he now appears in marble under his altar, in his own dear church? We at least cannot imagine him as more beautiful. And not only that church do we love, but that ancient chapel which stands in the midst of the ruined Palatine, to mark the spot on which he fell.†

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE REVIVAL.

NIGHT was far advanced, when the black slave, having completed her marriage settlement, quite to her own satisfaction, was returning to her mistress's house. It was, indeed, a cold wintry night, so she was well wrapped up, and in no humor to be disturbed. But it was a lovely night, and the moon seemed to be stroking, with a silvery hand, the downy robe of the *Meta Sudans*.* She paused beside it; and, after a silence of some moments, broke out into a loud laugh, as if some ridiculous recollection connected itself in her mind with that beautiful object. She was turning round to proceed on her way, when she felt herself roughly seized by the arm.

"If you had not laughed," said her captor, bitterly, "I should not have recognized you. But that hyena laugh of yours is unmistakable. Listen, the wild beasts, your African cousins, are answering it from the amphitheatre. What was it about, pray?"

"About you."

"How about me?"

"I was thinking of our last interview in this place, and what a fool you made of yourself."

"How kind of you, Afra, to be thinking of me, especially as I was not just then thinking of you, but of your countrymen in those cells."

"Cease your impertinence, and call people by their proper names. I am not Afra the slave any longer, at least I shall not be so in a few hours; but Jubala, the wife of Hypinx, commander of the Mauritanian archers."

"A very respectable man, no doubt, if he could speak any language besides his gibberish; but these few hours of interval may suffice for the transaction of our business. You made a mistake, methinks, in what you said just now. It was *you*, was it not, that made a fool of me at our last meeting? What has become of your fair promises, and of my fairer gold, which were exchanged on that occasion? Mine, I know, proved sterling; yours, I fear, turned out but dust."

"No doubt; for so says a proverb in my language: 'the dust on the wise man's skirts is better than the gold in the fool's girdle.' But let us come to the point: did you really ever believe in the power of my charms and philtres?"

"To be sure I did; do you mean they were all imposture?"

"Not quite all; you see we have got rid of Fabius, and the daughter is in possession of the fortune. That was a preliminary step of absolute necessity."

"What! do you mean that your incantations removed the father?" asked Corvinus amazed, and shrinking from her. It was only a sudden bright thought of Afra's, so she pushed her advantage, saying:

"To be sure; what else? It is easy thus to get rid of any one that is too much in the way."

"Good night, good night," he replied, in great fear.

"Stay a moment," she added, somewhat propitiated: "Corvinus, I gave you two pieces of advice worth all your gold that night. One you have acted against; the other you have not followed."

"How?"

"Did I not tell you not to hunt the Christians, but to catch them in your toils? Fulvius has done the second, and has gained something. You have done the first, and what have you earned?"

"Nothing but rage, confusion and stripes."

"Then I was a good counsellor in the one advice; follow me in the second."

"What was it?"

"When you had become rich enough by Christian spoil, to offer yourself, with your wealth, to Fabiola. She has till now coldly rejected every offer; but I have observed one thing carefully. Not a single suit has been accompanied by riches.

* "Membracque picta cruenore novo." *Prud. peristep.* iii. 29.

† The reader, when visiting the Crystal Palace, London, will find in the Roman Court an excellent model of the Roman Forum. On the raised mound of the forum, still, he will see the channel to which we allude. It has been lately re-

* The fountain before described.

Every spendthrift has sought her fortune to repair his own; depend upon it, he that wins the prize must come on the principle that two and two make four. Do you understand me?"

"Too well, for where are my two to come from?"

"Listen to me, Corvinus, for this is our last interview; and I rather like you as a hearty, unscrupulous, relentless, and unfeeling good hater." She drew him nearer and whispered: "I know from Eurotas, out of whom I can wheedle anything, that Fulvius has some splendid Christian prizes in view, one especially. Come this way into the shadow, and I will tell you how surely you may intercept his treasure. Leave to him the cool murder that will be necessary, for it may be troublesome; but step in between him and the spoil. He would do it to you any day."

She spoke to him for some minutes in a low and earnest tone; and at the end, he broke out into the loud exclamation, "Excellent!" What a word in such a mouth!

She checked him by a pull, and pointing to the building opposite, exclaimed: "Hush! look there!"

How are the tables turned; or, rather, how has the world gone round in a brief space! The last time these two wicked beings were on the same spot, plotting bane to others, the window above was occupied by two virtuous youths, who, like two spirits of good, were intent on unravelling their web of mischief, and countermining their dark approaches. They are gone thence, the one sleeping in his tomb, the other slumbering on the eve of execution. Death looks to us like a holy power, seeing how much he prefers taking to his society the good, rather than the evil. He snatches away the flower, and leaves the weed its poisonous life, till it drops into mature decay.

But at the moment that they looked up, the window was occupied by two other persons.

"That is Fulvius," said Corvinus, "who just came to the window."

"And the other is his evil demon, Eurotas," added the slave. They both watched and listened from their dark nook.

Fulvius came again, at that moment, to the window with a sword in his hand, carefully turning and examining the hilt in the bright moonlight. He flung it down at last, exclaiming, with an oath, "It is only brass, after all!"

Eurotas came with, to all appearance, a rich officer's belt, and examined it carefully. "All false stones! Why I declare the whole of the effects are not worth fifty pounds. You have made but a poor job of this, Fulvius."

"Always reproaching me, Eurotas. And yet this miserable gain has cost me the life of one of the emperor's most favorite favorites."

"And no thanks probably from your master for it." Eurotas was right.

Next morning, the slaves who received the body of Sebastian were surprised, by a swarthy female figure passing by them, and whispering to them, "He is still alive."

Instead, therefore, of carrying him out for burial, they bore him to the apartment of Irene. The early hour of the morning, and the emperor's having gone, the evening before, to his favorite Lateran palace, facilitated this movement. Instantly Dionysius was sent for, and pronounced every wound curable; not one arrow having touched a vital organ. But loss of blood had taken place to such a fearful extent, that he considered weeks must elapse before the patient would be fit to move.

For four-and-twenty hours Afra assiduously called almost every hour, to ask how Sebastian was. When the probationary term was finished, she conducted Fabiola to Irene's apartment, to receive herself assurance that he breathed, though scarcely more. The deed of her liberation from servitude was executed, her dowry was paid, and the whole Palatine and Forum rung with the mad carouse and hideous rites of her nuptials.

Fabiola inquired after Sebastian with such tender solicitude, that Irene doubted not that she was a Christian. The first few times she contented herself with receiving intelligence at the door, and putting into the hands of Sebastian's hostess a large

sum towards the expenses of his recovery; but after two days, when he was improving, she was courteously invited to enter; and for the first time in her life, she found herself consciously in the bosom of a Christian family.

Irene, we are told, was the widow of Castulas, one of the Chromatian band of converts. Her husband had just suffered death; but she remained still, unnoticed, in the apartments held by him in the palace. Two daughters lived with her; and a marked difference in their behavior soon struck Fabiola, as she became familiar with them. One evidently thought Sebastian's presence an intrusion, and seldom or never approached him. Her behavior to her mother was rude and haughty, her ideas all belonged to the common world,—she was selfish, light, and forward. The other, who was the younger, was a perfect contrast to her,—so gentle, docile, and affectionate; so considerate about others, so devoted to her mother; so kind and attentive to the poor patient. Irene herself was a type of the Christian matron, in the middle class of life. Fabiola did not find her intelligent or learned, or witty, or highly polished; but she saw her always calm, active, sensible, and honest. Then she was clearly warm-hearted, generous, deeply affectionate, and sweetly patient. The pagan lady had never seen such a household,—so simple, frugal, and orderly. Nothing disturbed it, except the character of the elder sister. In a few days it was ascertained that the daily visitor was not a Christian; but this caused no change in their treatment of her. Then she in turn made a discovery, which mortified her—that the elder daughter was still a heathen. All that she saw made a favorable impression on her, and softened the hard crust of prejudice on her mind. For the present, however, her thoughts were all absorbed in Sebastian, whose recovery was slow. She formed plans with Irene for carrying him off to her Campanian villa, where she would have leisure to confer with him on religion. An insuperable obstacle, however, rose to this project.

We will not attempt to lead our reader into the feelings of Sebastian. To have yearned after martyrdom, to have prayed for it, to have suffered all its pangs, to have died in it as far as human consciousness went, to have lost sight of this world, and now to awaken in it again, no martyr, but an ordinary wayfaring man on probation, who might yet lose salvation,—was surely a greater trial than martyrdom itself. It was to be like a man who, in the midst of a stormy night, should try to cross an angry river, or tempestuous arm of the sea, and, after struggling for hours, and having his skiff twirled round and round and all but upset, should find himself relanded on the same side as he started from. Or, it was like St. Paul sent back to earth and to Satan's buffets, after having heard the mysterious words which only one Intelligence can utter. Yet no murmur escaped him, no regret. He adored in silence the Divine Will, hoping that its purpose was only to give him the merit of a double martyrdom. For this second crown he so earnestly longed, that he rejected every proposal for flight and concealment.

"I have now," he generously said, "earned one privilege of a martyr, that of speaking boldly to the persecutors. This I will use the first day that I can leave my bed. Nurse, me, therefore, well, that it may be the sooner."

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE SECOND CROWN.

THE memorable plot which the black slave betrayed to Corvinus, was one to which allusion has already been made, in the conversation between Fulvius and his guardian. He was convinced from the blind martyr's unsuspecting admissions, that Agnes was a Christian, and he believed he had now two strings to his bow; either he could terrify her into marriage with himself, or he could destroy her, and obtain a good share of her wealth, by confiscation. He was nerved for this second alternative by the taunts and exhortations of Eurotas; but,

despairing of obtaining another interview, he wrote her a respectful, but pressing letter, descriptive of his disinterested attachment to her, and entreating her to accept his suit. There was but the faintest hint at the end, that duty might compel him to take another course, if humble petition did not prevail.

To this application he received a calm, well-bred, but unmistakable refusal; a stern, final, and hopeless rejection. But more, the letter stated in clear terms, that the writer was already espoused to the spotless Lamb, and could admit from no perishable being expressions of personal attachment. This rebuff steeled his heart against pity; but he determined to act prudently.

In the meantime, Fabiola, seeing the determination of Sebastian not to fly, conceived the romantic idea of saving him, in spite of himself, by extorting his pardon from the emperor. She did not know the depths of wickedness in man's heart. She thought that the tyrant might fume for a moment, but that he would never condemn a man twice to death. Some pity and mercy, she thought, must linger in his breast; and her earnest pleading and tears would extract them, as heat does the hidden balsam from the hard wood. She accordingly sent a petition for an audience; and knowing the covetousness of the man, presumed, as she said, to offer him a slight token of her own and her late father's loyal attachment. This was a ring with jewels of rare beauty, and immense value. The present was accepted; but she was merely told to attend with her memorial at the Palatine on the 20th, in common with other petitioners, and wait for the emperor's descent by the great staircase, on his way to sacrifice. Unencouraging as was this answer, she resolved to risk any thing, and do her best.

The appointed day came; and Fabiola, in her mourning habits, worn both as a suppliant, and for her father's death, took her stand in a row of far more wretched creatures than herself, mothers, children, sisters, who held petitions for mercy, for those dearest to them, now in dungeons or mines. She felt the little hope she had entertained die within her at the sight of so much wretchedness, too much for it all to expect favor. But fainter grew its last spark, at every step that the tyrant took down the marble stairs, though she saw her brilliant ring sparkling on his coarse hand. For on each step he snatched a paper from some sorrowful suppliant, looked at it scornfully, and either tore it up, or dashed it on the ground. Only here and there, he handed one to his secretary, a man scarcely less imperious than himself.

It was now nearly Fabiola's turn; the emperor was only two steps above her, and her heart beat violently, not from fear of man, but from anxiety about Sebastian's fate. She would have prayed, had she known how, or to whom. Maximian was stretching out his hand to take a paper offered to him, when he drew back, and turned round, on hearing his name most unceremoniously and peremptorily called out. Fabiola looked up too; for she knew the voice.

Opposite to her, high in the white marble wall, she had observed an open window, corniced in yellow marble, which gave light to a back corridor leading to where Irene's apartments were. She now looked up, guided by the voice, and in the dark panel of the window, a beautiful, but awful picture was seen. It was Sebastian, wan and thin, who, with features almost etherealized, calm and stern, as if no longer capable of passion, or strong emotion, stood there before them; his lacerated breast and arms appearing amidst the loose drapery he had thrown around him. For he had heard the familiar trumpet-notes, which told him of the emperor's approach, and he had risen, and crept thus far, to greet him.*

"Maximian!" he cried out, in a hollow but distinct voice,

"Who art thou, sirrah! that makest so free with thine emperor's name?" asked the tyrant, turning upon him.

"I am come as from the dead, to warn thee that the day of wrath and vengeance is fast approaching. Thou hast spilt the blood of God's Saints upon the pavement of this city; thou hast cast their holy bodies into the river, or flung them away upon the dunghills at the gates. Thou hast pulled down God's tem-

ples, and profaned His altars, and rifled the inheritance of His poor. For these, and thine own foul crimes and lewdnesses, thine injustices and oppressions, thy covetousness and thy pride, God hath judged thee, and His wrath shall soon overtake thee; and thou shalt die the death of the violent; and God will give His Church an emperor after His own heart. And thy memory shall be accursed through this whole world, till the end of time. Repent thee, while thou hast time, impious man; and ask forgiveness of God, in the name of Him, the Crucified, whom thou hast persecuted till now."

Deep silence was held while these words were fully uttered. The emperor seemed under the influence of a paralyzing awe; for soon recognizing Sebastian, he felt as if standing in the presence of the dead. But quickly recovering himself and his passion, he exclaimed: "Ho! some of you, go round instantly and bring him before me!" (he did not like to pronounce his name). "Hyphax here! Where is Hyphax? I saw him just now."

But the Moor had at once recognized Sebastian, and run off to his quarters. "Ha! he is gone, I see; then here, you dolt, what's your name?" (addressing Corvinus, who was attending his father,) "go to the Numidian court, and summon Hyphax here directly."

With a heavy heart Corvinus went on his errand. Hyphax had told his tale, and put his men in order of defence. Only one entrance at the end of the court was left open; and when the messenger had reached it, he durst not advance. Fifty men stood along each side of the space, with Hyphax and Jubala on the opposite end. Silent and immovable, with their dark chests and arms bare, each with his arrow fixed, and pointed to the door, and the string ready drawn, they looked like an avenue of basalt statues, leading to an Egyptian temple.

"Hyphax," said Corvinus, in a tremulous voice, "the emperor sends for you."

"Tell his majesty, respectfully, from me," replied the African, "that my men have sworn, that no man passes that threshold, coming in, or going out, without receiving, through his breast or his back, a hundred shafts into his heart; until the emperor shall have sent us a token of forgiveness for every offence."

Corvinus hastened back with this message, and the emperor received it with a laugh. They were men with whom he could not afford to quarrel; for he relied on them in battle, or insurrection, for picking out the leaders. "The cunning rascals!" he exclaimed. "There, take that trinket to Hyphax's black spouse." And he gave him Fabiola's splendid ring. He hastened back, delivered his gracious embassy, and threw the ring across. In an instant every bow dropt, and every string relaxed. Jubala, delighted, sprang forward and caught the ring. A heavy blow from her husband's fist felled her to the ground, and was greeted with a shout of applause. The savage seized the jewel; and the woman rose, to fear that she had only exchanged one slavery for a worse.

Hyphax screened himself behind the imperial command. "If," he said, "you had allowed us to send an arrow through his head or heart, all would have been straight. As it was, we are not responsible."

"At any rate, I will myself see my work done properly this time," said Maximian. Two of you fellows with clubs come here."

Two of his attendant executioners came from behind; Sebastian, scarcely able to stand, was also there; mild and intrepid. "Now, my men," said the barbarian, "I must not have any blood spilt on these stairs; so you knock the life out of him with your outgels; make clean work of it. Madam, what is your petition?"—stretching out his hand to Fabiola, whom he recognized, and so addressed more respectfully. She was horrified and disgusted, and almost fainting at the sight before her; so she said, "Sire I fear it is too late!"

"Why too late!" looking at the paper. A flash came to his eye, as he said to her: "What! You knew that Sebastian was alive? Are you a Christian?"

"No, sire," she replied. Why did the denial almost dry up

* See the Acts of St. Sebastian.

in her throat? She could not for her life have said she was anything else. Ah! Fabiola, thy day is not far off.

"But, as you said just now," replied the emperor, more serene, returning her petition, "I fear it is too late; I think that blow must have been the *ictus gratus*!"*

"I feel faint, sire," said she, respectfully; may I retire?"

"By all means. But, by the bye, I have to thank you for the beautiful ring which you sent, and which I have given to Hyphax's wife," (lately her own slave!). "It will look more brilliant on a black hand, than ever on mine. Adieu! and he kissed his hand with a wicked smile, as if there were no martyr's body near to witness against him. He was right; a heavy blow on the head had proved fatal; and Sebastian was safe where he had so longed to be. He bore with him a double palm, and received a twofold crown. Yet still, an ignominious end before the world; beaten to death without ceremony, while the emperor conversed. How much of martyrdom is in its disgrace! Woe to us when we know that our sufferings earn us honor!

The tyrant, seeing his work completed, ordered that Sebastian at least should not be cast into the Tiber nor on a dunghill. "Put plenty of weights to his body," he added, "and throw it into the Cloaca,* to rot there, and be the food of the vermin. The Christians at least shall not have it." This was done; and the Saint's Acts inform us, that in the night he appeared to the holy matron Lucina, and directed her where to find his sacred remains. She obeyed his summons, and they were buried with honor where now stands his basilica.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE CRITICAL DAY: ITS FIRST PART.

There are critical days in the life of man and of mankind. Not merely the days of Marathon, of Cannæ, or of Lepanto, in which a different result might have influenced the social or political fate of mankind. But it is probable that Columbus could look back upon not only the day, but the precise hour, the decision of which secured to the world all that he taught and gave it, and to himself the singular place which he holds among its worthies. And each of us, little and insignificant as he may be, has had his critical day; his day of choice, which has decided his fate through life; his day of Providence, which altered his position or his relation to others; his day of grace, when the spiritual conquered the material. In whatever way it has been every soul, like Jerusalem, has had its day.

And so with Fabiola, has not all been working up towards a crisis? Emperor and slave, father and guest, the good and the wicked, Christian and heathen, rich and poor; then life and death, joy and sorrow, learning and simplicity, silence and conversation, have they not all come as agents, pulling at her mind in opposite ways, yet all directing her noble and generous, though haughty and impetuous, soul one way, as the breeze and the rudder struggle against one another, only to determine the ship's single path? By what shall the resolution of these contending forces be determined? That rests not with man; wisdom, not philosophy, can decide. We have been engaged with events commemorated on the 20th of January; let the reader look, and see what comes on the following day in his calendar, and he will agree it must be an important day in our little narrative.

From the audience, Fabiola retired to the apartments of Irene, where she found nothing but desolation and sorrow. She sympathized fully with the grief around her, but she saw and felt that there was a difference between her affliction and theirs. There was a buoyancy about them: there was almost an exultation breaking out through their distress; their clouds were sunlit and brightened at times. Hers was a dead and sullen, a dull and heavy gloom, as if she had sustained a hopeless loss. Her search after Christianity, as associated with any thing

amiable or intelligent, seemed at an end. Her desired teacher, or informant, was gone. When the crowd had moved away from the palace, she took affectionate leave of the widow and her daughters; but, some way or other, she could not like the heathen one as she loved her sister.

She sat alone at home, and tried to read; she took up volume after volume of favorite works on Death, on Fortune, on Friendship, on Virtue; and every one of them seemed insipid, unsound, and insincere. She plunged into a deeper and a deeper melancholy, which lasted till towards evening, when she was disturbed by a letter being put into her hand. The Greek slave, Graja, who brought it in, retired to the other end of the room, alarmed and perplexed by what she had witnessed. For her mistress had scarcely glanced over the note, than she leapt up wildly from her seat, threw her hair into disorder with her hands, which she pressed, as in agony, on her temples, stood thus for a moment, looking up with an unnatural stare in her eyes, and then sank heavily down again on her chair with a deep groan. Thus she remained for some minutes, holding the letter in both her hands, with her arms relaxed, apparently unconscious.

"Who brought this letter?" she then asked, quite collected.

"A soldier, madam," answered the maid.

"Ask him to come here."

While her errand was being delivered, she composed herself, and gathered up her hair. As soon as the soldier appeared she held this brief dialogue:

"Whence do you come?"

"I am on guard at the Tullian prison."

"Who gave you the letter?"

"The Lady Agnes herself."

"On what cause is the poor child there?"

"On the accusation of a man named Fulvius, for being a Christian."

"For nothing else?"

"For nothing, I am sure."

"Then we shall soon set that matter right. I can give witness to the contrary. Tell her I will come presently; and take this for your trouble."

The soldier retired, and Fabiola was left alone. When there was something to do, her mind was at once energetic and concentrated, though afterwards the tenderness of womanhood might display itself the more painfully. She wrapped herself close up, proceeded alone to the prison, and was at once conducted to the separate cell, which Agnes had obtained, in consideration of her rank, backed by her parents' handsome largitions.

"What is the meaning of this, Agnes?" eagerly inquired Fabiola, after a warm embrace.

"I was arrested a few hours ago, and brought hither."

"And is Fulvius fool enough, as well as scoundrel, to trump up an accusation against you, which five minutes will confute? I will go to Tertullus myself, and contradict his absurd charge."

"What charge, dearest?"

"Why, that you are a Christian."

"And so I am, thank God!" replied Agnes, making on herself the sign of the cross.

The announcement did not strike Fabiola like a thunderbolt, nor rouse her, nor stagger her, nor perplex her. Sebastian's death had taken all edge or heaviness from it. She had found that faith existing in what she had considered the type of every manly virtue; she was not surprised to find it in her, whom she had loved as the very model of womanly perfection. The simple grandeur of that child's excellence, her guileless innocence, and unexcepting kindness, she had almost worshipped. It made Fabiola's difficulties less, it brought her problem nearer to a solution, to find two such peerless beings to be not mere chance-grown plants, but springing from the same seed. She bowed her head in reverence for the child, and asked her, "How long have you been so?"

"All my life, dear Fabiola; I sucked the faith, as we say, with my mother's milk."

"And why did you conceal it from me?"

* The *coup de grace*, the blow by which culprits were "put out of their pain." Breaking the legs of the crucified was considered an *ictus gratus*.

* The great sewer of Rome.

"Because I saw your violent prejudices against us; how you abhorred us as practisers of the most ridiculous superstitions, as perpetrators of the most odious abominations. I perceived how you contemned us as unintellectual, uneducated, unphilosophical, and unreasonable. You would not hear a word about us; and the only object of hatred to your generous mind was the Christian name."

"True, dearest Agnes; yet I think that had I known that you, or Sebastian, was a Christian, I could not have hated it. I could have loved any thing in you."

"You think so, now, Fabiola; but you know not the force of universal prejudice, the weight of falsehood daily repeated. How many noble minds, fine intellects, and loving hearts have they enslaved, and induced to believe all that we are not, something even worse than the worst of others!"

"Well, Agnes, it is selfish in me to argue thus with you in your present position. You will of course compel Fulvius to prove that you are a Christian."

"Oh, no! dear Fabiola; I have already confessed it, and intend to do so again publicly in the morning."

"In the morning!—what, to-morrow?" asked Fabiola, shocked at the idea of anything so immediate.

"Yes, to-morrow. To prevent any clamor or disturbance about me (though I suspect few people will care much), I am to be interrogated early, and summary proceedings will be taken. Is not that good news, dear?" asked Agnes eagerly, seizing her cousin's hands. And then putting on one of her ecstatic looks, she exclaimed, "Behold, what I have long coveted, I already see; what I have hoped for, I hold safe; to Him alone I feel already associated in heaven, whom here on earth I have loved with all devotedness.* Oh! is He not beautiful, Fabiola; lovelier far than the angels who surround Him! How sweet His smile! how mild His eye! how bland the whole expression of His face! And that sweetest and most gracious Lady, who ever accompanies Him, our Queen and Mistress, who loves Him alone, how winningly doth she beckon me forward to join her train! I come! I come!—They are departed, Fabiola; but they return early for me to-morrow; early, mind, and we part no more."

Fabiola felt her own heart swell and heave, as if a new element were entering in. She knew not what it was, but it seemed something better than a mere human emotion. She had not heard the name of Grace. Agnes, however, saw the favorable change in her spirit, and inwardly thanked God for it. She begged her cousin to return before dawn to her, for their final farewell.

At this same time a consultation was being held at the house of the prefect, between that worthy functionary and his worthier son. The reader had better listen to it, to learn its purport.

"Certainly," said the magistrate, "if the old sorceress was right in one thing, she ought to be in the other. I will answer from experience, how powerful is wealth in conquering any resistance."

"And you will allow, too," rejoined Corvinus, "from the enumeration we have made, that among the competitors for Fabiola's hand, there has not been one who could not justly be rather called an aspirant after her fortune."

"Yourself included, my dear Corvinus."

"Yes, so far; but not if I succeed in offering her, with myself the lady Agnes's great wealth."

"And in a manner too, methinks, that will more easily gain upon what I hear of her generous and lofty disposition. Giving her that wealth independent of conditions, and then offering yourself to her, will put her under one of two obligations, either to accept you as her husband, or throw you back the fortune."

"Admirable, father! I never saw the second alternative before. Do you think there is no possibility of securing it except through her?"

"None whatever. Fulvius, of course, will apply for his

share; and the probability is, that the emperor will declare he intends to take it all for himself. For he hates Fulvius. But if I propose a more popular and palpably reasonable plan, of giving the property to the nearest relation, who worships—this Fabiola does, don't she?"

"Certainly, father."

"I think he will embrace it! while I am sure there is no chance of making a free gift to me. The proposal from a judge would enrage him."

"Then how will you manage it, father?"

"I will have an imperial rescript prepared during the night, ready for signature; and I will proceed immediately after the execution to the palace, magnify the unpopularity which is sure to follow it, lay it all on Fulvius, and show the emperor how his granting the property to the next in the settlement of it, will redound greatly to his credit and glory. He is as vain as he is cruel and rapacious; and one vice must be made to fight another."

"Nothing could be better, my dear father; I shall retire to rest with an easy mind. To-morrow will be the critical day of my life. All my future depends upon whether I am accepted or rejected."

"I only wish," added Tertullus, rising, "that I could have seen this peerless lady, and sounded the depths of her philosophy, before your final bargain was struck."

"Fear not, father; she is well worthy of being your daughter-in-law. Yes, to-morrow is indeed the turning-point of my fortunes."

Even Corvinus can have his critical day. Why not Fabiola?

Whilst this domestic interview was going on, a conference was taking place between Fulvius and his amiable uncle. The latter, entering late, found his nephew sitting sullen and lone in the house, and thus accosted him.

"Well, Fulvius, is she secured?"

"She is, uncle, as fast as bars and walls can make her: but her spirit is free and independent as ever."

"Never mind that: sharp steel makes short work of spirit. Is her fate certain? and are its consequences sure?"

"Why, if nothing else happens, the first is safe; the second has still to encounter imperial caprice. But I own I feel pain and remorse at sacrificing so young a life, and for an insecure result."

"Come Fulvius," said the old man sternly, looking as cold as a grey rock in the morning mist; "no softness, I hope, in this matter. Do you remember what day is to-morrow?"

"Yes, the twelfth before the calends of February."

"The critical day always for you. It was on this day that to gain another's wealth, you committed——"

"Peace, peace!" interrupted Fulvius in agony. Why will you always remind me of every thing I most wish to forget?"

"Because of this: you wish to forget yourself, and this must not be. I must take you from every pretence to be guided by conscience, virtue, or even honor. It is folly to affect compassion for any one's life, who stands in the way of your fortune, after what you did to her."

Fulvius bit his lip in silent rage, and covered his crimson face with his hands. Eurotas roused him by saying: "Well then, to-morrow is another, and probably a final critical day for you. Let us calmly weigh its prospects. You will go to the emperor, and ask for your rightful share in the confiscated property. Suppose it is granted?"

"I will sell it as quick as possible, pay my debts, and retire to some country where my name has never been heard."

"Suppose your claims are rejected?"

"Impossible, impossible!" exclaimed Fulvius, racked by the very idea; it is my right, hardily earned. It cannot be denied me."

"Quietly, my young friend; let us discuss the matter coolly. Remember our proverb: 'From the stirrup to the saddle there has been many a fall.' Suppose only that your rights are refused you?"

* "Ecce quod concupivi jam video, quod speravi jam teneo; ipsi sum juncta tibi colla quam in terris visis tota deo longe dilaui." *Office of St. Agnes.*

"Then I am a ruined man. I have no other prospect before me, of retrieving my fortunes here. Still I must fly hence."

"Good: and what do you owe at Janus's arch?"*

"A good couple of hundred sestertia,† between principal and compound interest at fifty per cent, to that unconscionable Jew, Ephraim.

"On what security?"

"On my sure expectation of this lady's estates."

"And if you are disappointed, do you think he will let you fly?"

"Not if he knows it, most assuredly. But we must be prepared from this moment for any emergency; and that with the utmost secrecy."

"Leave that to me, Fulvius; you see how eventful the issue of to-morrow may be to you, or rather of to-day; for morning is approaching. Life or death to you hangs upon it; it is the great day of your existence. Courage then, or rather an inflexible determination, steel you to work out its destiny!"

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE SAME DAY: ITS SECOND PART.

THE day is not yet dawning, and nevertheless we speak of having reached its second part. How may this be! Gentle reader, have we not led you to its first vespers, divided as they are between Sebastian of yesterday, and Agnes of to-day? Have not the two sung them together, without jealousy, and with fraternal impartiality, the one from the heaven which he ascended in the morning, the other from the dungeon into which she descended in the evening? Glorious Church of Christ! great in the unclashing combination of thy unity, stretching from heaven to beneath the earth, wherever exists a prison-house of the just.

From his lodgings Fulvius went out into the night air, which was crisp and sharp, to cool his blood, and still his throbbing brows. He wandered about, almost without any purpose; but found himself imperceptibly drawing nearer and nearer to the Tullian prison. As he was literally without affection, what could be his attraction thither? It was a strangely compounded feeling, made up of as bitter ingredients as ever filled the prisoner's cup. There was gnawing remorse; there was baffled pride; there was goading avarice; there was humbling shame; there was a terrible sense of the approaching consummation of his villany. It was true, he had been rejected, scorned, baffled by a mere child, while her fortune was necessary for his rescue from beggary and death,—so at least he reasoned; yet he would still rather have her hand than her head. Her murder appeared revoltingly atrocious to him, unless absolutely inevitable. So he would give her another chance.

He was now at the prison-gate, of which he possessed the watchword. He pronounced it, entered; and, at his desire, was conducted to his victim's cell. She did not flutter, nor run into a corner, like a bird into whose cage the hawk has found entrance: calm and intrepid, she stood before him.

"Respect me here, Fulvius, at least," she gently said; "I have but few hours to live: let them be spent in peace."

"Madam," he replied, "I have come to lengthen them, if you please, to years; and, instead of peace, I offer happiness."

"Surely, sir, if I understand you, the time is past for this sad vanity. Thus to address one whom you have delivered over to death, is at best a mockery."

"It is not so, gentle lady; your fate is in your own hands; only your own obstinacy will give you over to death. I have come to renew, once more, my offer, and with it that of life. It is your last chance."

"Have I not before told you that I am a Christian; and that I would forfeit a thousand lives rather than betray my faith?"

"But now I ask you no longer to do this. The gates of the

prison are yet open to me. Fly with me; and, in spite of the imperial decrees, you shall be a Christian, and yet live."

"Then have I not clearly told you that I am already espoused to my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and that to Him alone I keep eternal faith?"

"Folly and madness! Persevere in it till to-morrow, and that may be awarded to you which you fear more than death, and which will drive this illusion for ever from your mind."

"I fear nothing for Christ. For know, that I have an angel ever guarding me, who will not suffer his Master's handmaid to suffer scorn.* But now, cease this unworthy importunity, and leave me the last privilege of the condemned—solitude."

Fulvius had been gradually losing patience, and could no longer restrain his passion. Rejected again, baffled once more by a child, this time with the sword hanging over her neck! A flame irrepressible broke out from the smouldering heat within him; and, in an instant, the venomous ingredients that we have described as mingled in his heart, were distilled into one black, solitary drop,—HATRED. With flashing look, and furious gesture, he broke forth:

"Wretched woman, I give thee one more opportunity of rescuing thyself from destruction. Which wilt thou have, life with me, or death?"

"Death even I will choose for her, rather than life with a monster like thee!" exclaimed a voice just within the door.

"She shall have it," he rejoined, clenching his fist, and darting a mad look at the new speaker; "and thou, too, if again thou darest to fling thy baneful shadow across my path."

Fabiola was alone for the last time with Agnes. She had been for some minutes unobserved watching the contest, between what would have appeared to her, had she been a Christian, an angel of light and a spirit of darkness; and truly Agnes looked like the first, if human creature ever did. In preparation for her coming festival of full espousals to the Lamb, when she should sign her contract of everlasting love, as He had done, in blood, she had thrown over the dark garments of her mourning, a white and spotless bridal robe. In the midst of that dark prison, lighted by a solitary lamp, she looked radiant and almost dazzling; while her tempter, wrapped up in his dark cloak, crouching down to rush out of the low door of the dungeon, looked like a black and vanquished demon, plunging into an abyss beneath.

Then Fabiola looked into her countenance, and thought she had never seen it half so sweet. No trace of anger, of fear, of flurry, or agitation, was there; no paleness, no flush, no alternations of hectic excitement and pallid depression. Her eyes beamed with more than the usual mild intelligence; her smile was as placid and cheerful as it ever was, when they discoursed together. Then there was a noble air about her, a greatness of look and manner, which Fabiola would have compared to that mien and stateliness, and that ambrosial atmosphere by which, in poetical mythology, a being of a higher sphere was recognized on earth.† It was not inspiration, for it was passionless; but it was such expression and manner, as her highest conceptions of virtue and intellect, combined in the soul, might be supposed to stamp upon the outward form. Hence her feelings passed beyond love into a higher range; they were more akin to reverence.

Agnes took one of her hands in each of her own, crossed them upon her own calm bosom, and looking into her face with a gaze of blandest earnestness, said:

"Fabiola, I have one dying request to make you. You have never refused me any; I am sure you will not this."

"Speak not thus to me, dearest Agnes; you must not request; you command me now."

"Then promise me, that you will immediately apply your mind to master the doctrines of Christianity. I know you will embrace them; and then you will no longer be to me what you are now."

"And what is that?"

* In or near the forum stood several arches dedicated to Janus, and called simply by his name, near where usurers or money-lenders kept their posts.

† \$8,000.

* "Mecum enim habeo custodem corporis mei, Angelum Domini." *The Breviary*.

† "Incessu patuit Dea."

"Dark, dark, dearest Fabiola. When I look upon you thus, I see in you a noble intellect, a generous disposition, an affectionate heart, a cultivated mind, a fine moral feeling, and a virtuous life. What can be desired more in woman? and yet over all these splendid gifts there hangs a cloud, to my eyes, of gloomy shadow, the shade of death. Drive it away, and all will be lightsome and bright."

"I feel it, dear Agnes—I feel it. Standing before you, I seem to be as a black spot compared to your brightness. And how, embracing Christianity, shall I become light like you?"

"You must pass, Fabiola, through the torrent that sunders us" (Fabiola started, recollecting her dream). "Waters of refreshment shall flow over your body, and oil of gladness shall embalm your flesh; and the soul shall be washed clean as the driven snow, and the heart be softened as the babe's. From that bath you will come forth a new creature, born again to a new and immortal life."

"And shall I lose all that you have but just now prized in me?" asked Fabiola, somewhat downcast.

"As the gardener," answered the martyr, "selects some hardy and robust, but unprofitable plant, and on it engrafs but a small shoot of one that is sweet and tender, and the flowers and fruits of this belong to the first, and yet deprive it of no grace, no grandeur, no strength that it had before, so will the new life you shall receive ennoble, elevate, and sanctify (you can scarcely understand this word), the valuable gifts of nature and education which you already possess. What a glorious being Christianity will make you, Fabiola!"

"What a new world you are leading me to, dear Agnes! Oh, that you were not leaving me outside of its very threshold!"

"Hark!" exclaimed Agnes, in an ecstasy of joy. "They come, they come! You hear the measured tramp of the soldiers in the gallery. They are the bridesmen coming to summon me. But I see on high the white-robed bridesmaids borne on the bright clouds of morning, and beckoning me forward. Yes, my lamp is trimmed, and I go forth to meet the Bridegroom. Farewell, Fabiola, weep not for me. Oh, that I could make you feel, as I do, the happiness of dying for Christ! And now I will speak a word to you which I never addressed to you before,—God bless you!" And she made the sign of the Cross on Fabiola's forehead. An embrace, convulsive on Fabiola's part, calm and tender on Agnes's, was their last earthly greeting. The one hastened home, filled with a new and generous purpose; the other resigned herself to the shame stricken guard.

Over the first part of the martyr's trials we cast a veil of silence, though ancient Fathers, and the Church in her offices dwell upon it, as doubling her crown.* Suffice it to say, that her angel protected her from harm;† and that the purity of her presence converted a den of infamy into a holy and lovely sanctuary.‡ It was still early in the morning when she stood again before the tribunal of the prefect, in the Roman Forum; unchanged and unscathed, without a blush upon her smiling countenance, or a pang of sorrow in her innocent heart. Only her unshorn hair, the symbol of virginity, which had been let loose, flowed down, in golden waves, upon her snow-white dress.§

It was a lovely morning. Many will remember it to have been a beautiful day on its anniversary, as they have walked out of the Nomentan Gate, now the Porta Pia, towards the church which bears our virgin-martyr's name, to see blessed upon her altar the two lambs, from whose wool are made the palliums sent by the Pope to the archbishops of his commun-

ion. Already the almond-trees are hoary, not with frost, but with blossoms; the earth is being loosened round the vines, and spring seems latent in the swelling buds, which are watching for the signal from the southern breeze, to burst and expand.* The atmosphere, rising into a cloudless sky, has just that temperature that one loves, of a sun, already vigorous, not heating, but softening, the slightly frosty air. Such we have frequently experienced St. Agnes's day, together with thousands, hastening to her shrine.

The judge was sitting in the open Forum, and a sufficient crowd formed a circle round the charmed space, which few save Christians, loved to enter. Among the spectators were two whose appearance attracted general attention; they stood opposite each other, at the ends of the semicircle formed by the multitude. One was a youth, enveloped in his toga, with a slouching hat over his eyes, so that his features could not be distinguished. The other was a lady of aristocratic mien, tall and erect, such as one does not expect to meet on such an occasion. Wrapped close about her, and so ample as to veil her from head to foot, like the beautiful ancient statue, known among artists by the name of Modesty,† she had a scarf or mantle of Indian workmanship, woven in richest pattern of crimson, purple, and gold, a garment truly imperial, and less suitable, than even female presence, to this place of doom and blood. A slave, or servant, of superior class attended her, carefully veiled also, like her mistress. The lady's mind seemed intent on one only object, as she stood immovable, leaning with her elbow on a marble post.

"Why is she unfettered?" asked the prefect angrily.

"She does not need it: she walks so readily," answered Catulus; "and she is so young."

"But she is obstinate as the oldest. Put manacles on her at once."

The executioner turned over a quantity of such prison ornaments—to Christian eyes really such—and at length selected a pair as light and small as he could find, and placed them round her wrists. Agnes playfully, and with a smile, shook her hands, and they fell, like St. Paul's viper, clattering at her feet.‡

"They are the smallest we have, sir," said the softened executioner; "one so young ought to wear other bracelets."

"Silence, man!" rejoined the exasperated judge, who, turning to the prisoner, said, in a blander tone:

"Agnes, I pity thy youth, thy station, and the bad education thou hast received. I desire, if possible, to save thee. Think better while thou hast time. Renounce the false and pernicious maxims of Christianity, obey the imperial edicts, and sacrifice to the gods."

"It is useless," she replied, "to tempt me longer. My resolution is unalterable. I despise thy false divinities, and can only love and serve the one living God. Eternal Ruler, open wide the heavenly gates, until lately closed to man. Blessed Christ, call to Thee the soul that cleaveth unto Thee: victim first to Thee by virginal consecration; now to Thy Father by martyrdom's immolation."§

"I waste time, I see," said the impatient prefect, who saw symptoms of compassion rising in the multitude. "Secretary, write the sentence. We condemn Agnes, for contempt of the imperial edicts, to be punished by the sword."

"On what road, and at what mile-stone, shall the judgment be executed?"|| asked the headsman.

"Let it be carried into effect at once," was the reply.

Agnes raised for one moment her hands and eyes to heaven,

* "Solvitur acris hyems, grata vice veris et Favoni." Horace.

† Pudicitia.

‡ St. Ambrose, *ubi supra*.

§ "Æterne Rector, divide januas,
Cœli, observatas terrigenis prius,
Acto sequentem, Christe, animam voca,
Cum virginealem, tum Patris hostiam."

Prudentius, *perci stroph.* 14.

* "Duplex corona est præstita martyri." Prudentius.

† "Ingressa Agnes turpitudinis locum, Angelum Domini præparatum invenit." The Breviary.

‡ The Church of St. Agnes in the Piazza Navona, one of the most beautiful in Rome.

"Cui porro soli Cunctipotens dedit
Castum vel ipsum reddere fornicem
* * * * *
Nil non pudicum est quod pia visere
Dignaris, almo vel pede tangere."

Prudentius.

§ "Non intorto crine caput comptum." Her head not dressed with braided hair. St. Ambrose, lib. 1. de *Virgin.* c. 2. See Prudentius's description of St. Eulalia, *perci stroph.* hymn. iii. 21.

[This was the usual practice, to behead out of the gate, at the second, third or fourth mile-stone; but it is clear from Prudentius and other writers that Agnes suffered at the place of trial, of which we have other instances.

then calmly knelt down. With her own hands she drew forward her silken hair over her head, and exposed her neck to the blow.* A pause ensued, for the executioner was trembling with emotion, and could not wield his sword.† As the child knelt alone, in her white robe, with her head inclined, her arms modestly crossed upon her bosom, and her amber locks hanging almost to the ground, and veiling her features, she might not unaptly have been compared to some rare plant, of which the slender stalk, white as the lily, bent with the luxuriance of its golden blossom.

The judge angrily reproved the executioner for his hesitation, and bid him at once do his duty. The man passed the back of his rough left hand across his eyes, as he raised his sword. It was seen to flash for an instant in the air, and the next moment, flower and stem were lying scarcely displaced on the ground. It might have been taken for the prostration of prayer, had not the white robe been in that minute dyed into a rich crimson—washed in the blood of the Lamb.

The man on the judge's right hand had looked with unflinching eye upon the stroke, and his lip curled in a wicked triumph over the fallen. The lady opposite had turned away her head, till the murmur, that follows a suppressed breath in a crowd, told her all was over. She then boldly advanced forward, unwound from round her person her splendid brocaded mantle, and stretched it, as a pall, over the mangled body. A burst of applause followed this graceful act of womanly feeling,‡ as the lady stood, now in the garb of deepest mourning, before the tribunal.

"Sir," she said in a tone clear and distinct, but full of emotion, "grant me one petition. Let not the rude hands of your servants again touch and profane the hallowed remains of her, whom I have loved more than any thing on earth; but let me bear them hence to the sepulchre of her fathers; for she was noble as she was good."

Tertullus was manifestly irritated, as he replied: "Madam, whoever you may be, your request cannot be granted, Calulus see that the body be cast, as usual, into the river, or burnt."

"I entreat you, sir," the lady earnestly insisted, "by every claim which female virtue has upon you, by any tear which a mother has shed over you, by every soothing word which a sister has ever spoken to you, in illness or sorrow; by every ministration of their gentle hands, I implore you to grant my humble prayer. And if, when you return home this evening, you will be met at the threshold by daughters, who will kiss your hand, though stained with the blood of one, whom you may feel proud if they resemble, be able to say to them, at least, that this slightest tribute to the maidenly delicacy which they prize, has not been refused."

Such common sympathy was manifested, that Tertullus anxious to check it, asked her sharply:

"Pray, are you, too a Christian?"

She hesitated for one instant, then replied, "No, sir, I am not; but I own that if any thing could make me one, it would be what I have seen this day."

"What do you mean?"

"Why, that, to preserve the religion of the empire such beings as she whom you have slain" (her tears interrupted her for a moment) "should have to die; while monsters who disgrace the shape and name of man should have to live and flourish. Oh, sir, you know not what you have blotted out from earth this day! She was the purest, sweetest, holiest thing I ever knew upon it, the very flower of womanhood, though yet a child. And she might have lived yet, had she not scorned the proffered hand of a vile adventurer; who pursued her with his loathsome offers, into the seclusion of her villa, into the sanctuary of her home, and even into the last retreat of her dungeon. For this she died, that she would not endow with her wealth, and ennoble by her alliance, that Asiatic spy."

She pointed with calm scorn at Fulvius, who bounded forward, and exclaimed with fury: "She lies, foully and calumniously, sir. Agnes openly confessed herself a Christian."

"Bear with me, sir," replied the lady, with noble dignity, "while I convict him; and look on his face for proof of what I say. Didst thou not, Fulvius, early this morning, seek that gentle child in her cell, and deliberately tell, her (for unseen, I heard you) that if she would but accept thy hand, not only wouldst thou save her life, but, despising the imperial commands, secure her still remaining a Christian?"

Fulvius stood, pale as death: stood, as one does for a moment who is shot through the heart, or struck by lightning. He looked like a man on whom sentence is going to be pronounced,—not of death, but of eternal pillory, as the judge addressed him saying:

"Fulvius, thy very look confirms this grievous charge. I could arraign thee on it, for thy head at once. But take my counsel, begone hence for ever. Flee, and hide thyself after such villainy, from the indignation of all just men, and from the vengeance of the gods. Show not thy face again here, nor in the Forum, nor in any public place of Rome. If this lady please, even now I will take her deposition against thee. Pray, madam," he asked most respectfully, "may I have the honor of knowing your name?"

"Fabiola," she replied.

The judge was now all complacency, for he saw before him, he hoped, his future daughter-in-law. "I have often heard of you, madam," he said, "and of your high accomplishments, and exalted virtues. You are, moreover, nearly allied to this victim of treachery, and have a right to claim her body. It is at your disposal." This speech was interrupted at its beginning by a loud hiss and yell that accompanied Fulvius's departure. He was pale with shame, terror, and rage.

Fabiola gracefully thanked the prefect, and beckoned to Syra, who attended her. The servant again made a signal to some one else; and presently four slaves appeared bearing a lady's litter. Fabiola would allow no one but herself and Syra to raise the relics from the ground, place them on the litter, and cover them with their precious pall. "Bear this treasure to its own home," she said, and followed as mourner with her maid. A little girl, all in tears, timidly asked if she might join them. "Who art thou?" asked Fabiola. "I am poor Emerentiana, her foster-sister," replied the child; and Fabiola led her kindly by the hand.

The moment the body was removed, a crowd of Christians, children, men and women, threw themselves forward, with sponges and linen cloths, to gather up the blood. In vain did the guards fall on them, with whips, cudgels, and even with sharper weapons, so that many mingled their own blood with that of the martyr. When a sovereign, at his coronation, or on first entering his capital, throws, according to ancient custom, handfuls of gold and silver coins among the crowd, he does not create a more eager competition for his scattered treasures, than there was among those primitive Christians, for what they valued more than gold or precious stones, the ruby drops which a martyr had poured from his heart for his Lord. But all respected the prior claim of one; and here it was the deacon Reparatus, who, at risk of life, was present, phial in hand, to gather the blood of Agnes's testimony; that it might be appended, as a faithful seal, to the record of martyrdom on her tomb.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE SAME DAY: ITS THIRD PART.

TERTULLUS hastened at once to the palace: fortunately, or unfortunately, for these candidates for martyrdom. There he met Corvinus, with the prepared rescript, elegantly engrossed in *uncial*, that is, large capital letters. He had the privilege of immediate admission into the imperial presence; and, as a matter of business, reported the death of Agnes, exaggerated

* Prudentius.

† St. Ambrose.

‡ Prudentius mentions that a sudden fall of snow shrouded thus the body of St. Eulalia lying in the forum. *Ubi sup.*

the public feeling likely to be caused by it, attributed it all to the folly and mismanagement of Fulvius, whose worst guilt he did not disclose, for fear of having to try him, and thus bringing out what he was now doing; depreciated the value of Agnes's property, and ended by saying, that it would be a gracious act of clemency, and one sure to counteract unpopular feelings, to bestow it upon her relative, who by settlement was her next heir. He described Fabiola as a young lady of extraordinary intellect and wonderful learning, who was most zealously devoted to the worship of the gods, and daily offered sacrifice to the genius of the emperors.

"I know her," said Maximian, laughing, as if at the recollection of something very droll. "Poor thing! she sent me a splendid ring, and yesterday asked me for that wretched Sebastian's life, just as they had finished cudgelling him to death." And he laughed immoderately, then continued: "Yes, yes, by all means; a little inheritance will console her, no doubt, for the loss of that fellow. Let a rescript be made out, and I will sign it."

Tertullus produced the one prepared, saying he had fully relied on the emperor's magnanimous clemency; and the imperial barbarian put a signature to it which would have disgraced a schoolboy. The prefect at once consigned it to his son.

Scarcely had he left the palace, when Fulvius entered. He had been home to put on a proper court attire, and removed from his features, by the bath and the perfumer's art, the traces of his morning's passion. He felt a keen presentiment that he should be disappointed. Eurotas's cool discussion of the preceding evening, had prepared him; the cross of all his designs, and his multiplied disappointments that day, had strengthened his instinctive conviction. One woman, indeed, seemed born to meet and baffle him whichever way he turned; but, "thank the gods," he thought, "she cannot be in my way here. She has this morning blasted my character for ever; she cannot claim my rightful reward: she has made me an outcast; it is not in her power to make me a beggar." This seemed his only ground of hope. Despair, indeed, urged him forward; and he determined to argue out his claims to the confiscated property of Agnes, with the only competitor he could fear, the rapacious emperor himself. He might as well risk his life over it, for if he failed, he was utterly ruined. After waiting some time, he entered the audience-hall, and advanced with the blandest smile that he could muster to the imperial feet.

"What want you here?" was his first greeting.

"Sire," he replied, "I have come humbly to pray your royal justice, to order my being put into immediate possession of my share of the Lady Agnes's property. She has been convicted of being a Christian upon my accusation, and has just suffered the merited penalty of all who disobey the imperial edicts."

"That is all quite right; but we have heard how stupidly you mismanaged the whole business as usual, and have raised murmurings and discontent in the people against us. So, now, the sooner you quit our presence, palace, and city, the better for yourself. Do you understand? We don't usually give such warnings twice."

"I will obey instantly every intimation of the supreme will. But I am almost destitute. Command what of right is mine to be delivered over to me, and I depart immediately."

"No more words," replied the tyrant, "but go at once. As to the property which you demand with so much pertinacity, you cannot have it. We have made over the whole of it, by an irrevocable rescript, to an excellent and deserving person, the Lady Fabiola."

Fulvius did not speak another word; but kissed the emperor's hand and slowly retired. He looked a ruined, broken man. He was only heard to say, as he passed out of the gate: "Then, after all, she *has* made me a beggar too." When he reached home, Eurotas, who read his answer in his nephew's eye, was amazed at his calmness.

"I see," he dryly remarked, "it is all over."

"Yes; are your preparations made, Eurotas?"

"Nearly so. I have sold the jewels, furniture, and slaves, at some loss; but, with the trifle I had in hand, we have enough to take us safe to Asia. I have retained Stabio, as the most trusty of our servants; he will carry our small travelling requisites on his horse. Two others are preparing for you and me. I have only one thing more to get for our journey, and then I am ready to start."

"Pray what is that?"

"The poison. I ordered it last night, but it will only be ready at noon."

"What is that for?" asked Fulvius, with some alarm.

"Surely you know," rejoined the other, unmoved. "I am willing to make one more trial any where else: but our bargain is clear; my father's family must not end in beggary. It must be extinguished in honor."

Fulvius bit his lip, and said, "Well, be it as you like, I am weary of life. Leave the house as soon as possible, for fear of Ephraim, and be with your horses at the third mile on the Latin gate soon after dusk. I will join you there. For I, too, have an important matter to transact before I start."

"And what is that?" asked Eurotas, with a rather keen curiosity.

"I cannot tell even you. But if I am not with you by two hours after sunset, give me up, and save yourself without me."

Eurotas fixed upon him his cold dark eye, with one of those looks which ever read Fulvius through; to see if he could detect any lurking idea of escape from his gripe. But his look was cool and unusually open, and the old man asked no more. While this dialogue was going on, Fulvius had been divesting himself of his court garments, and attiring himself in a travelling suit. So completely did he evidently prepare himself for his journey, without necessity of returning home, that he even took his weapons with him; besides his sword, securing in his girdle, but concealed under his cloak, one of those curved daggers, of highest temper and most fatal form, which were only known in the East.

Eurotas proceeded at once to the Numidian quarters in the palace, and asked for Jubala; who entered with two small flasks of different sizes, and was just going to give some explanations, when her husband, half-drunk, half-furious, was seen approaching. Eurotas had just time to conceal the flasks in his belt, and slip a coin into her hand, when Hyphax came up. His wife had mentioned to him the offers which Eurotas had made to her before marriage, and had excited in his hot African blood a jealousy that amounted to hatred. The savage rudely thrust his wife out of the apartment, and would have picked a quarrel with the Syrian; had not the latter, his purpose being accomplished, acted with forbearance, assured the archer-chief that he should never more see him, and retired.

It is time, however, that we return to Fabiola. The reader is probably prepared to hear us say, that she returned home a Christian: and yet it is not so. For what as yet did she know of Christianity, to be said to profess it? In Sebastian and Agnes she had indeed willingly admired the virtue, unselfish, generous, and more than earthly, which now she was ready to attribute to that faith. She saw that it gave motives of actions, principles of life, elevation of mind, courage of conscience, and determination of virtuous will, such as no other system of belief ever bestowed. And even if, as she now shrewdly suspected, and intended in calmer moments to ascertain, the sublime revelations of Syra, concerning an unseen sphere of virtue, and its all-seeing Ruler, came from the same source, to what did it all amount more than to a grand moral and intellectual system, partly practical, partly speculative, as all codes of philosophic teaching were? This was a very different thing from Christianity. She had as yet heard nothing of its real and essential doctrines, its fathomless, yet accessible depths of mystery; the awful, vast, and heaven-high structure of faith, which the simplest soul may contain; as a child's eye will take in the perfect reflection and counterpart of a mountain, though a giant cannot scale it. She had never heard of a God, One in Trinity; of the coequal Son incarnate for man. She had

never been told of the marvellous history, of Redemption by God's sufferings and death. She had not heard of Nazareth, or Bethlehem, or Calvary. How could she call herself a Christian, or be one, in ignorance of all this.

How many names had to become familiar and sweet to her which as yet were unknown, or barbarous—Mary, Joseph, Peter, Paul and John! Not to mention the sweetest of all, His, whose name is balm to the wounded heart, or as honey dropping from the broken honeycomb. And how much had she yet to learn about the provision for salvation on earth, in the Church, in grace, in sacraments, in prayer, in love, in charity to others! What unexplored regions lay beyond the small tract which she had explored!

No; Fabiola returned home, exhausted almost by the preceding day and night, and the sad scenes of the morning, and retired to her own apartment, no longer perhaps even a philosopher, yet not a Christian. She desired all her servants to keep away from the court which she occupied, that she might not be disturbed by the smallest noise; and she forbade any one to have access to her. There she sat in loneliness and silence, for several hours, too excited to obtain rest from slumber. She mourned long over Agnes, as a mother might over a child suddenly carried off. Yet, was there not a tinge of light upon the cloud that overshadowed her, more than when it hung over her father's bier? Did it not seem to her an insult to reason, an outrage to humanity, to think that *she* had perished; that she had been permitted to walk forward in her bright robe, and with her smiling countenance, and with her joyous, simple heart, straight on—into nothing; that she had been allured by conscience, and justice, and purity, and truth, on, on, till with arms outstretched, to embrace them, she stepped over a precipice, beneath which yawned annihilation? No. Agnes, she felt sure, was happy somehow, somewhere; or justice was a senseless word.

"How strange," she further thought, "that everyone whom I have known endowed with superior excellence, men like Sebastian, women like Agnes, should turn out to have belonged to the scorned race of Christians! One only remains, and to-morrow I will interrogate her."

When she turned from these, and looked around upon the heathen world, Fulvius, Tertullus, the Emperor, Calpurnius—nay, she shuddered as she surprised herself on the point of mentioning her own father's name—it sickened her to see the contrast of baseness with nobleness, vice with virtue, stupidity with wisdom, and the sensual with the spiritual. Her mind was thus being shaped into a mould, which some form of practical excellence must be found to fill, or it must be broken; her soul was craving as a parched soil, which heaven must send its waters to refresh, or it must become an eternal desert.

Agnes, surely, well deserved the glory of gaining, by her death, her kinswoman's conversion; but was there not one, more humble, who had established a prior claim? One who had given up freedom, and offered life, for this unselfish gain?

While Fabiola was alone and desolate, she was disturbed by the entrance of a stranger, introduced under the ominous title of "A messenger from the emperor." The porter had at first denied him admittance; but upon being assured that he bore an important embassy from the sovereign, he felt obliged to inquire from the steward what to do; when he was informed that no one with such a claim could be refused entrance.

Fabiola was amazed, and her displeasure was somewhat mitigated, by the ridiculous appearance of the person deputed in such a solemn character. It was Corvinus, who with clownish grace approached her, and in a studied speech, evidently got up very floridly, and intrusted to a bad memory, laid at her feet an imperial rescript, and his own sincere affection, the Lady Agnes's estates, and his clumsy hand. Fabiola could not at all comprehend the connection between the two combined presents, and never imagined that the one was a bribe for the other. So she desired him to return her humble thanks to the emperor for his gracious act; adding, "Say that I am too ill to-day to present myself, and do him homage."

"But these estates you are aware, were forfeited and con-

fiscated," he gasped out in great confusion, "and my father has obtained them for you."

"That was unnecessary," said Fabiola, "for they were settled on me long ago, and became mine the moment"—she faltered, and after a strong effort at self-mastery, she continued—"the moment they ceased to be another's: they did not fall under confiscation."

Corvinus was dumb-founded; at last he stumbled into something meant for a humble petition to be admitted as an aspirant after her hand, but understood by Fabiola to be a demand of recompense, for procuring or bringing so important a document. She assured him that every claim he might have on her should be fully and honorably considered at a more favorable moment; but as she was exceedingly wearied and unwell, she must beg him to leave her at present. He did so quite elated, fancying that he had secured his prize.

After he was gone, she hardly looked at the parchment, which he had left open on a small table by her couch, but sat musing on the sorrowful scenes she had witnessed, till it wanted about an hour to sunset. Sometimes her reveries turned to one point, sometimes to another of the late events: and, at last, she was dwelling on her being confronted with Fulvius, that morning, in the Forum. Her memory vividly replaced the entire scene before her, and her mind gradually worked itself into a state of painful excitement, which she at length checked by saying aloud to herself; "Thank heaven! I shall never behold that villain's face again."

The words were scarcely out of her mouth, when she shaded her eyes with her hand, as she raised herself up on her couch, and looked towards the door. Was it her overheated fancy which beguiled her, or did her wakeful eyes show her a reality? Her ears decided the question, by these words which they heard.

"Pray, madam, who is the man you honor by that gracious speech?"

"You, Fulvius," she said, rising with dignity. A further intruder still; not only into the house, the villa, and the dungeon, but into the most secret apartments of a lady's residence; and what is worse, into the house of sorrow of one whom you have bereaved. Begone at once, or I will have you ignominiously expelled hence."

"Sit down and compose yourself, lady," rejoined the intruder; "this is my last visit to you; but we have a reckoning to make together of some weight. As to crying out, or bringing in help, you need not trouble yourself; your orders to your servants, to keep aloof, have been too well obeyed. There is no one within call."

It was true. Fulvius found the way prepared unwittingly for him by Corvinus; for upon presenting himself at the door, the porter, who had seen him twice dine at the house, told him of the strict orders given, and assured him that he could not be admitted unless he came from the emperor, for such were his instructions. That, Fulvius said was exactly his case; and the porter, wondering that so many imperial messengers should come in one day, let him pass. He begged that the door might be left unfastened, in case the porter should not be at his post when he retired; for he was in a hurry, and should not like to disturb the house, in such a state of grief! He added, that he required no guide, for he knew the way to Fabiola's apartment.

Fulvius seated himself opposite to the lady, and continued: "You ought not to be offended, madam, with my unexpectedly coming upon you, and overhearing your amiable soliloquies about myself; it is a lesson I learnt from yourself in the Tullian prison. But I must begin my scores from an earlier date. When, for the first time, I was invited by your worthy father to his table, I met one, whose looks and words at once gained my affections,—I need not now mention her name—and whose heart, with instinctive sympathy returned them."

"Insolent man!" Fabiola exclaimed, "to allude to such a topic here; it is false, that any such affection ever existed on either side."

"As to the Lady Agnes," resumed Fulvius, "I have the best

authority, that of your lamented parent, who more than once encouraged me to persevere in my suit; by assuring me that his cousin had confided to him her reciprocating love."

Fabiola was mortified; for she now remembered that this was too true, from the hints which Fabius had given her, of his stupid misunderstanding.

"I know well, that my dear father was under a delusion upon the subject; but I, from whom that dear child concealed nothing—"

"Except her religion," interrupted Fulvius, with bitter irony.

"Peace!" Fabiola went on; "that word sounds like blasphemy on your lips—I knew that you were but an object of loathing and abhorrence to her,"

"Yes, after you made me such. From that hour of our first meeting, you became my bitter and unrelenting foe, in conspiracy with that treacherous officer, who has received his reward, and whom you had destined for the place I courted. Repress your indignation, lady, for I *will* be heard out—you undermined my character, you poisoned her feelings, and you turned my love into necessary enmity."

"Your love!" now broke in the indignant lady: "even if all that you have said were not basely false, what love could you have for *her*? How could *you* appreciate her artless simplicity, her genuine honesty, her rare understanding, her candid innocence, any more than the wolf can value the lamb's gentleness, or the vulture the dove's gentleness? No, it was her family connection, her nobility, that you grasped at, and nothing more; I read it in the very flash of your eye, when first it fixed itself, as a basilisk's, upon her."

"It is false!" he rejoined; "had I obtained my request, had I been thus worthily mated, I should have been found equal to my position, domestic, contented, and affectionate; as worthy of possessing her as—"

"As any one can be," struck in Fabiola, "who, in offering his hand, expresses himself equally ready, in three hours, to espouse or to murder the object of his affection. And she prefers the latter, and he keeps his word. Begone from my presence; you taint the very atmosphere in which you move."

"I will leave when I have accomplished my task, and you will have little reason to rejoice when I do. You have then purposely, and unprovoked, blighted and destroyed in me every honorable purpose of life, withered my only hope, cut me off from rank, society, respectable ease, and domestic happiness."

"That was not enough. After acting in that character, with which you summed up my condemnation, of a spy, and listened to my conversation, you this morning threw off all sense of female propriety, and stood forward prominently in the Forum, to complete in public what you had begun in private, excite against me the supreme tribunal, and through it the emperor, and arouse an unjust popular outcry and vengeance; such as, but for a feeling stronger than fear, which brings me hither, would make me now skulk, like a hunted wolf, till I could steal out of the nearest gate."

"And, Fulvius, I tell you," interposed Fabiola, "that the moment you cross its threshold, the average of virtue will be raised in this wicked city. Again I bid you depart from my house, at least; or at any rate I will withdraw from this offensive intrusion."

"We part not yet, lady," said Fulvius, whose countenance had been growing every moment more flushed, as his lips had been becoming more deadly pale. He rudely grasped her arm, and pushed her back to her seat; "and beware," he added, "how you attempt again either to escape or to bring aid; your first cry will be your last, cost me what it may."

"You have made me, then, an outcast, not only from society but from Rome, an exile, a homeless wanderer on a friendless earth; was not that enough to satisfy your vengeance? No; you must needs rob me of my gold, of my rightfully, though painfully earned wealth; peace, reputation, my means of subsistence, all *you* have stolen from me, a youthful stranger,"

"Wicked and insolent man!" exclaimed the now indignant Roman lady, reckless of consequences, "you shall answer

heavily for your temerity. Dare you, in my own house, call me a thief?"

"I dare; and I tell you this is your day of reckoning, and not mine. I have earned, even if by crime, it is nothing to you, my full share of your cousin's confiscated property. I have earned it hardly, by pangs and rendings of the heart and soul, by sleepless nights of struggles with fiends that have conquered; ay, and with one at home that is sterner than they; by days and days of restless search for evidence, amidst the desolation of a proud, but degraded spirit. Have I not a right to enjoy it?"

"Ay, call it what you will, call it my blood-money; and the more infamous it is, the more base in you to step in and snatch it from me. It is like a rich man tearing the carrion from the hound's jaws, after he has swollen his feet and rent his skin in hunting it down."

"I will not seek for further epithets by which to call you; your mind is deluded by some vain dream," said Fabiola, with an earnestness not untinged with alarm. She felt she was in the presence of a madman, one in whom violent passion, carried off by an unchecked, deeply-moved fancy, was lashing itself up to that intensity of wicked excitement, which constitutes a moral phrenzy—when the very murderer thinks himself a virtuous avenger. "Fulvius," she continued, with studied calmness, and looking fully into his eyes, "I now *entreat* you to go. If you want money, you shall have it; but in heaven's name go, before you destroy your reason by your anger."

"What vain fancy do you mean?" asked Fulvius.

"Why, that I should have ever dreamt about Agnes's wealth or property on such a day, or should have taken any advantage of her cruel death."

"And yet it is so; I have it from the emperor's mouth that he has made it over to you. Will you pretend to make me believe, that this most generous and liberal prince ever parted with a penny unsolicited, ay, or unbribed?"

"Of this I know nothing. But I know, that I would rather have died of want than petitioned for a farthing of such property!"

"Then would you make me rather believe, that in this city there is any one so disinterested as, undesired, to have petitioned for you? No, no, Lady Fabiola, all this is too incredible. But what is that?" And he pounced with eagerness on the imperial rescript, which had remained unlooked at, since Corvinus had left it. The sensation to him was like that of Aeneas when he saw Pallas's belt upon the body of Turnus. The fury, which seemed to have been subdued by his subtlety, as he had been reasoning to prove Fabiola guilty, flashed up anew at the sight of this fatal document. He eyed it for a minute, then broke out, gnashing his teeth with rage:

"Now, madam, I convict you of baseness, rapacity, and unnatural cruelty, far beyond anything you have dared to charge on me! Look at this rescript, beautifully engrossed, with its golden letters and emblazoned margins; and presume to say that it was prepared in the one hour that elapsed between your cousin's death, and the emperor's telling me that he had signed it? Nor do you pretend to know the generous friend who procured you the gift. Bah! while Agnes was in prison at latest; while you were whining and moaning over her; while you were reproaching me for cruelty and treachery towards her,—me, a stranger and alien to her! you, the gentle lady, the virtuous philosopher, the loving, fondling kinswoman, you, my stern reprover, were coolly plotting to take advantage of my crime, for securing her property, and seeking out the elegant scribe, who should gild your covetousness with his pencil, and paint over your treason to your own flesh and blood, with his blushing *minium*!"*

"Cease, madman, cease!" exclaimed Fabiola, endeavoring in vain to master his glaring eye. But he went on, in still wilder tone:

"And then, forsooth, when you have thus basely robbed me, you offer me money. You have out-plotted me, and you pity

* Red paint.

me! You have made me a beggar, and then you offer me alms, — alms out of my own wages, the wages that even hell allows its fated victims while on earth!"

Fabiola rose again, but he seized her with a maniac's gripe, and this time did not let her go. He went on:

"Now listen to the last words that I will speak, or they may be the last that you will hear. Give back to me that unjustly obtained property; it is not fair that I should have the guilt, and you its reward. Transfer it by your sign manual to me as a free and loving gift, and I will depart. If not, you have signed your own doom." A stern and menacing glance accompanied these words.

Fabiola's haughty self rose again erect within her; her Roman heart, unsubdued, stood firm. Danger only made her fearless. She gathered her robe with matronly dignity around her, and replied:

"Fulvius, listen to my words, though they should be the last that I may speak; as certainly they shall be the last that you shall hear from me.

"Surrender this property to you? I would give it willingly to the first leper that I might meet in the street, but to you never. Never shall you touch thing that belonged to that holy maiden, be it a gem or be it a straw! That touch would be pollution. Take gold of mine, if it please you; but any thing that ever belonged to her, from me no treasures can ransom. And one legacy I prize more than all her inheritance. You have now offered me two alternatives, as last night you did her, to yield to your demands, or die. Agnes taught me which to choose. Once again, I say, depart."

"And leave you to possess what is mine? leave you to triumph over me, as one whom you have outwitted—you honored, and I disgraced—you rich, and I penniless—you happy, and I wretched? No, never! I cannot save myself from what you have made me; but I can prevent your being what you have no right to be. For this I have come here; this is my day of Nemesis.* Now die!" While he was speaking these reproaches, he was slowly pushing her backwards with his left hand towards the couch from which she had risen; while his right was tremblingly feeling for something in the folds of his bosom.

As he finished his last word, he thrust her violently down upon the couch, and seized her by the hair. She made no resistance, she uttered no cry; partly a fainting and sickening sensation came over her; partly a noble feeling of self-respect checked any unseemly exhibition of fear, before a scornful enemy. Just as she closed her eyes, she saw something like lightning above her; she could not tell whether it was his glaring eye or flashing steel.

In another moment she felt oppressed and suffocated, as if a great weight had fallen upon her; and a hot stream was flowing over her bosom.

A sweet voice full of tenderness sounded in her ears:

"Cease, Orontius; I am thy sister Miriam!"

Fulvius, in accents choked with passion, replied:

"It is false; give me up my prey!"

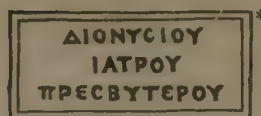
A few words more were faintly spoken in a tongue unknown to Fabiola; when she felt her hair released, heard the dagger dashed to the ground, and Fulvius cry out bitterly, as he rushed out of the room:

"O Christ! this is Thy Nemesis!"

Fabiola's strength was returning; but she felt the weight upon her increase. She struggled, and released herself. Another body was lying in her place, apparently dead, and covered with blood.

It was the faithful Syra, who had thrown herself between her mistress's life and her brother's dagger.

CHAPTER XXXI.



The great thoughts, which this occurrence would naturally have suggested to the noble heart of Fabiola, were suppressed, for a time, by the exigencies of the moment. Her first care was to stanch the flowing blood with whatever was nearest at hand. While she was engaged in this work, there was a general rush of servants to her apartment. The stupid porter begun to be uneasy at Fulvius's long stay (the reader has now heard his real name), when he saw him dash out of the door like a maniac, and thought he perceived stains of blood upon his garment. He immediately gave the alarm to the entire household.

Fabiola by a gesture stopped the crowd at the door of her room, and desired only Euphrosyne and her Greek maid to enter. The latter, since the influence of the black slave had been removed, had attached herself most affectionately to Syra, as we must still call her, and had, with great docility, listened to her moral instructions. A slave was instantly despatched for the physician who had always been sent for by Syra in illness, Dionysius, who, as we have already observed, lived in the house of Agnes.

In the meantime, Fabiola had been overjoyed at finding the blood cease to flow so rapidly, and still more at seeing her servant open her eyes upon her, though only for a moment. She would not have exchanged for any wealth the sweet smile which accompanied that look.

In a few minutes the kind physician arrived. He carefully examined the wound, and pronounced favorably on it for the present. The blow, as aimed, would have gone straight to Fabiola's heart. But her loving servant, in spite of prohibition, had been hovering near her mistress during the whole day; never intruding, but anxious for any opportunity which might offer, of seconding those good impressions of grace, which the morning's scenes could not failed to have produced. While in a neighboring room, she heard violent tones which were too familiar to her ears; and hastened noiselessly round, and within the curtain which covered the door of Fabiola's own apartment. She stood concealed in the dusk, on the very spot where Agnes had, a few months before, consoled her.

She had not been there long, when the last struggle commenced. While the man was pushing her mistress backwards, she followed him close behind, and as he was lifting his arm, passed him, and threw her body over that of his victim. The blow descended, but misdirected, through the shock she gave his arm; and it fell upon her neck, where it inflicted a deep wound, checked, however, by encountering the collar-bone. We need not say what it cost her to make this sacrifice. Not the dread of pain, nor the fear of death could for a moment have deterred her: it was the horror of imprinting on her brother's brow the mark of Cain, the making him doubly a fratricide, which deeply anguished her. But she had offered her life for her mistress. To have fought with the assassin, whose strength and agility she knew, would have been useless; to try to alarm the house before one fatal blow was struck was hopeless; and nothing remained but to accomplish her immolation, by substituting herself for the intended victim. Still she wished to spare her brother the consummation of his crime, and in doing so manifested to Fabiola their relationship and their real names.

In his blind fury he refused her credit; but the words, in their native tongue, which said, "Remember my scarf which you picked up here," brought back to his memory so terrible a domestic tale, that had the earth opened a cavern in that mo-

* [The tomb] of Dionysius, physician [and] priest, lately found at the entrance to the crypt of St. Cornelius, in the cemetery of Callistus.

ment before his feet, he would have leaped into it, to bury his remorse and shame.

Strange, too, it proved, that he should not have ever allowed Eurotas to get possession of that family relic, but should, ever since he regained it, have kept it apart as a sacred thing; and, when all else was being packed up, should have folded it up and put it in his breast. And now, in the act of drawing out his eastern dagger, he had plucked this out, too, and both were found upon the floor.

Dionysius, immediately after dressing the wound; and administering proper restoratives, which brought back consciousness, desired the patient to be left perfectly quiet, to see as few persons as possible, so as to prevent excitement, and to go on with the treatment which he prescribed until midnight. "I will call," he added, "very early in the morning, when I must see my patient alone." He whispered a few words in her ear, which seemed to do her more good than all his medicines; for her countenance brightened into an angelic smile.

Fabiola had her placed in her own bed, and allotting to her attendants the outward room, reserved to herself exclusively the privilege, as she deemed it, of nursing the servant, to whom a few months before she could hardly feel grateful for having tended her in fever. She had informed the others how the wound had been inflicted, concealing the relationship between her assailant and her deliverer.

Although herself exhausted and feverish, she would not leave the bedside of the patient; and when midnight was past and no more remedies had to be administered, she sank to rest upon a low couch close to the bed. And now what were her thoughts, when in the dim light of a sick-room, she opened her mind and heart to them? They were simple and earnest. She saw at once the reality and truth of all that her servant had ever spoken to her. When she last conversed with her, the principles which she heard with delight, had appeared to her wholly beyond practice, beautiful theories, which could not be brought to action. When Miriam had described a sphere of virtue, wherein no approbation or reward of man was to be expected, but only the approving eye of God, she had admired the idea, which powerfully seized her generous mind; but she had rebelled against its becoming the constraining rule of hourly conduct. Yet, if the stroke under which she cast herself had proved fatal, as it might easily have done, where would have been her reward? What, then, could be her motive but that very theory, as it seemed, of responsibility to an unseen power?

And when Miriam had discoursed of heroism in virtue as being its ordinary standard, how chimerical the principle had seemed! Yet here, without preparation, without forethought, without excitement, without glory,—nay, with marked desire of concealment, this slave had performed a deed of self-sacrifice, heroic in every way. From what could that result, but from habitual heroism of virtue, ready at any hour to do what would enoble for ever a soldier's name? She was no dreamer, then, no theorist, but a serious, real practiser of all that she taught. Could this be a philosophy? Oh, no, it must be a religion! the religion of Agnes and of Sebastian, to whom she considered Miriam every way equal. How she longed to converse with her again!

Early in the morning, according to his promise, the physician returned, and found his patient much improved. He desired to be left alone with her; when, having spread a linen cloth upon the table, and placed lighted tapers upon it, he drew from his bosom an embroidered scarf, and uncovered a golden box, the sacred contents of which she well knew. Approaching her he said,

"My dear child, as I promised you, I have now brought you not merely the truest remedy of every ailment, bodily and spiritual, but the very Physician Himself, who by His word alone restoreth all things,* whose touch opens the eyes of the blind and ears of the deaf, whose will cleanses lepers, the hem

of whose garment sends forth virtue to cure all. Are you ready to receive Him?"

"With all my heart," she replied, clasping her hands; "I long to possess Him whom alone I have loved, in whom I have believed, to whom my heart belongs."

"Does no anger or indignation exist in your soul against him who has injured you? does any pride or vanity arise in your mind at the thought of what you have done? or are you conscious of any other fault requiring humble confession and absolution before receiving the sacred gift into your breast?"

"Full of imperfection and sin I know myself to be, venerable father; but I am not conscious of any knowing offence. I have had no need to forgive him to whom you allude; I love him too much for that, and would willingly give my life to save him. And of what have I to be proud, a poor servant, who have only obeyed my Lord's commands?"

"Invite, then, my child, this Lord into your house, that coming He may heal you, and fill you with His grace."

Approaching the table, he took from it a particle of the Blessed Eucharist, in the form of unleavened bread, which, being dry, he moistened in water, and placed within her lips.* She closed them upon it, and remained for some time absorbed in contemplation.

And thus did holy Dionysius discharge his two-fold office of physician and priest, attributed to him on his tomb.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE SACRIFICE ACCEPTED.

THROUGH the whole of that day the patient seemed occupied with deep, but most pleasing, thoughts. Fabiola, who never left her, except for a few moments to give necessary directions, watched her countenance with a mixture of awe and delight. It appeared as if her servant's mind were removed from surrounding objects, and conversing in a totally different sphere. Now a smile passed like a sunbeam across her features, now a tear trembled in her eye, or flowed down her cheeks; sometimes her pupils were raised and kept fixed on heaven for a considerable time, while a blissful look of perfect and calm enjoyment sat unvarying upon her; and then, she would turn round with an expression of infinite tenderness towards her mistress, and hold out her hand to be clasped in hers. And Fabiola could sit thus for hours in silence, which was as yet prescribed; feeling it an honor, and thinking it did her good, to be in contact with such a rare type of virtue.

At length, in the course of the day, after giving her patient some nourishment, she said to her, smiling: "I think you are much better, Miriam, already. Your physician must have given you some wonderful medicine."

"Indeed he has, my dearest mistress."

Fabiola was evidently pained; and leaning over her, said softly: "Oh, do not, I entreat you, call me by such a title. If it has to be used, it should be by me towards you. But, in fact, it is no longer true; for what I intended has now been done; and the instrument of your liberation has been ordered to be made out, not as a freed-woman, but as an *ingenua*,† for such I know you are."

Miriam looked her thanks, for fear of further hurting Fabiola's feelings; and they continued to be happy together in silence.

Towards evening Dionysius returned, and found so great an improvement, that, ordering more nourishing food, he permitted a little quiet conversation.

"I must now," said Fabiola, as soon as they were alone,

* Eusebius, in his account of Serapion, teaches us that this was the manner of administering Holy Communion to the sick, without the cup, or under only one kind.

† Persons freed from slavery retained the title of *freedman* or *freedwoman* (*libertus*, *liberta*) of the person to whom they had belonged, as "of Augustus." If they had belonged originally to a free class, they were liberated as *ingenue* or *ingenua* (well-born) and restored by emancipation to that class.

"fulfil the first duty, which my heart has been burning to discharge, that of thanking you—I wish I knew a stronger word—not for the life which you have saved me, but for the magnanimous sacrifice which you made for it—and, let me add, the unequalled example of heroic virtue, which alone inspired it."

"After all, what have I done, but simple duty? You had a right to my life, for a much less cause than to save yours," answered Miriam.

"No doubt," responded Fabiola, "it appears so to you, who have been trained to the doctrine which overpowered me, that the most heroic acts ought to be considered by men as performances of ordinary duties.

"And thereby," rejoined Miriam, "they cease to be what you have called them."

"No, no," exclaimed Fabiola, with enthusiasm; "do not try to make me mean and vile to my own heart, by teaching me to undervalue what I cannot but prize as an unrivalled act of virtue. I have been reflecting on it, night and day, since I witnessed it; and my heart has been yearning to speak to you of it, and even yet I dare not, or I should oppress your weakness with my overcharged feelings. It was noble, it was grand, it was beyond all reach of praise; though I know you do not want it. I cannot see any way in which the sublimeness of the act could have been enhanced, or human virtue rise one step higher."

Miriam who was now raised to a reclining position, took Fabiola's hand between both hers; and turning round towards her, in a soft and mild but most earnest tone, thus addressed her.

"Good and gentle lady, for one moment listen to me. Not to depreciate what you are good enough to value, since it pains you to hear it, but to teach you how far we still are from what might have been done, let me trace for you a parallel scene, but where all shall be reversed. Let it be a slave—pardon me, dear Fabiola, for another pang—I see it in your face, but it shall be the last—yes, a slave brutish, ungrateful, rebellious to the most benign and generous of masters. And let the stroke, not of an assassin, but of the minister of justice, impend over his head. What would you call the act, how would you characterize the virtue of that master, if out of pure love, and that he might reclaim that wretched man, he should rush beneath the axe's blow, ay, and its preceding ignominious stripes, and leave written in his will, that he made that slave heir to his titles and his wealth, and desired him to be considered as his brother?"

"O Miriam, Miriam, you have drawn a picture too sublime to be believed of man. You have not eclipsed your own deed, for I spoke of *human* virtue. To act as you have now described would require, if possible, that of a god!"

Miriam pressed the folded hands to her bosom, fixed on Fabiola's wondering eyes a look of heavenly inspiration, as she sweetly and solemnly replied: "AND JESUS CHRIST, WHO DID ALL THIS FOR MAN, WAS TRULY GOD."

Fabiola covered her face with both her hands, and for a long time was silent. Miriam prayed earnestly in her own tranquil heart.

"Miriam, I thank you from my soul," at length Fabiola said; "you have fulfilled your promise of guiding me. For some time I have only been fearing that you might not be a Christian; but it could not be.

"Now tell me, are those awful, but sweet words, which you just now uttered, which have sunk into my heart as deeply, as silently, and as irrevocably as a piece of gold dropt upon the surface of the still ocean, goes down into its depths—are those words a mere part of the Christian system, or are they its essential principle?"

"From a simple allegory, dear lady, your powerful mind has, in one bound, reached and grasped the master-key of our whole teaching; the alambic of your refined understanding has extracted, and condensed into one thought, the most vital and prominent doctrines of Christianity. You have distilled them into their very essence.

"That man, God's creature and bondsman, rebelled against

his Lord; that justice irresistible had doomed, and pursued him; that this very Lord 'took the form of a servant, and in habit was found like a man;*' that in this form He suffered stripes, buffets, mockery, and shameful death, became the 'Crucified One,' as men here call him, and thereby rescued man from his fate, and gave him part in His own riches and kingdom; all this is comprised in the words that I have spoken.

"And you have reached the right conclusion. Only God could have performed so godlike an action, or have offered so sublime an expiation."

Fabiola was again wrapped up in silent thought, till she timidly asked,—

"And was it to this that you referred in Campania, when you spoke of God alone being a victim worthy of God?"

"Yes; but I further alluded to the continuation of that sacrifice, even in our own days, by a marvellous dispensation of an all-powerful love. However, on this I must not yet speak."

Fabiola resumed: "I every moment see, how all that you have ever spoken to me coheres and fits together, like the parts of one plant; all springing one from another. I thought it bore only the lovely flowers of an elegant theory; you have shown me in your conduct how these can ripen into sweet and solid fruit. In the doctrine which you have just explained, I seem to myself to find the noble stem from which all the others branch forth—even to that very fruit. For who would refuse to do for another, what is much less than God has done for him? But, Miriam, there is a deep and unseen root whence springs all this, possibly dark beyond contemplation, deep beyond reach, complex beyond man's power to unravel; yet perhaps simple to a confiding mind. If, in my present ignorance, I can venture to speak, it should be vast enough to occupy all nature, rich enough to fill creation with all that is good and perfect in it, strong enough to bear the growth of your noble tree, till its summit reach above the stars, and its branches to the ends of earth.

"I mean, your idea of that God, whom you made me fear, when you spoke to me as a philosopher of Him, and taught me to know as the ever-present watchman and judge; but whom I am sure you will make me love when, as a Christian, you exhibit Him to me, as the root and origin of such boundless tenderness and mercy.

"Without some deep mystery in His nature, as yet unknown to me, I cannot fully apprehend that wonderful doctrine of man's purchase."

"Fabiola," responded Miriam, "more learned teachers, than I, should undertake the instruction of one so gifted and so acute. But will you believe me, if I attempt to give you some explanation?"

"Miriam," replied Fabiola, with strong emphasis, "ONE WHO IS READY TO DIE FOR ANOTHER, WILL CERTAINLY NOT DECEIVE HIM."

"And now," rejoined the patient, smiling, "you have again seized a great principle—that of FAITH. I will, therefore, be only the simple narrator of what Jesus Christ, who truly died for us, has taught us. You will believe my word only as that of a faithful witness; you will accept His, as that of an unerring God."

Fabiola bowed her head, and listened with reverential mind to her, in whom she had long honored a teacher of marvellous wisdom, which she drew from some unknown school; but whom now she almost worshipped as an angel, who could open to her the flood-gates of the eternal ocean, whose waters are the unfathomable Wisdom, overflowing on earth.

Miriam expounded, in the simple terms of Catholic teaching, the sublime doctrine of the Trinity; then after relating the fall of man, unfolded the mystery of the Incarnation, giving, in the very words of St. John, the history of the Eternal Word, till He was made flesh, and dwelt among men. Often she was interrupted by the expressions of admiration or assent which her pupil uttered; never by cavil or doubt. Philosophy had given

place to religion, captiousness to docility, incredulity to faith.

But now a sadness seemed to have come over Fabiola's heart: Miriam read it in her looks, and asked her its cause.

"I hardly dare tell you," she replied. "But all that you have related to me is so beautiful, so divine, that it seems to me necessarily to end here.

"The Word (what a noble name !), that is, the expression of God's love, the extention of His wisdom, the evidence of His power, the very breath of His life-giving life, which is Himself, becometh flesh. Who shall furnish it to Him? Shall He take up the cast-off slough of a tainted humanity, or shall a new manhood be created expressly for Him? Shall He take His place in a double genealogy, receiving thus into Himself a twofold tide of corruption, and shall there be any one on earth daring and high enough to call himself His father?"

"No," softly whispered Miriam; "but there shall be one holy enough, and humble enough, to be worthy to call herself His mother !

"Almost 800 years before the Son of God came into the world a prophet spoke, recorded his words, and deposited the record of them in the hands of the Jews, Christ's inveterate enemies; and his words were these: 'Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and his name shall be called Emanuel,'[†] which in the Hebrew language signifies 'God with us,' that is with men.

"This prophecy was of course fulfilled in the conception and birth of God's Son on earth."

"And who was *she*?" asked Fabiola, with great reverence.

"One whose very name is blessed by every one that truly loves her Son. Mary is the name by which you will know her: Miriam, its original in her own tongue, is the one by which I honor her. Well, you may suppose, was she prepared for such high destiny by holiness and virtue; not as cleansed, but as ever clean; not as purified, but as always pure: not freed, but exempted, from sin. The tide of which you spoke, found before her the dam of an eternal decree, which could not brook that the holiness of God should mingle with what it could only redeem by keeping extraneous to itself. Bright as the blood of Adam, when the breath of God sent it sparkling through his veins, pure as the flesh of Eve, while standing yet in the mould of the Almighty hands, as they drew it from the side of the slumbering man, were the blood and the flesh, which the Spirit of God formed into the glorious humanity, that Mary gave to Jesus."

"And after this glorious privilege granted to our sex are you surprised that many, like your sweet Agnes, should have chosen this peerless virgin as the pattern of their lives; should find in her, whom God so elected, the model of every virtue; and should, in preference to allowing themselves to be yoked, even by the tenderest of ties, to the chariot-wheels of this world, seek to fly upwards on wings of undivided love like hers?"

After a pause and some reflection, Miriam proceeded briefly to detail the history of our Saviour's birth, His laborious youth, His active but suffering public life, and then His ignominious Passion. Often was the narrative interrupted by the tears and sobs of the willing listener and ready learner. At last the time for rest had come, when Fabiola humbly asked:

"Are you too fatigued to answer one question more?"

"No," was the cheerful reply.

"What hope," said Fabiola, "can there be for one who cannot say she was ignorant, for she pretended to know everything; nor that she neglected to learn, for she affected eagerness after every sort of knowledge; but can only confess that she scorned the true wisdom, and blasphemed its Giver—for one who has scoffed at the very torments which proved the love, and sneered at the death which was the ransoming, of Him whom she has mocked at, as the 'Crucified'?"

A flood of tears stopped her speech.

Miriam waited till their relieving flow had subsided into that gentler dew which softens the heart; then in soothing tones addressed her as follows:

"In the days of our Lord there lived a woman who bore the same name as his spotless mother; but she had sinned publicly, degradingly, as you, Fabiola, would abhor to sin. She became acquainted, we know not how, with her Redeemer; in the secrecy of her own heart, she contemplated earnestly, till she came to love intensely, His gracious and condescending familiarity with sinners, and His singular indulgence and forgivingness to the fallen. She loved and loved still more; and forgetting herself, she only thought how she might manifest her love, so that it might bring honor, however slight, to Him, and shame, however great, on herself.

"She went into the house of a rich man, where the usual courtesies of hospitality had been denied its Divine guest, into the house of a haughty man who spurned, in the presumption of his heart, the public sinner, she supplied the attentions which had been neglected to Him whom she loved; and she was scorned, as she expected, for her obtrusive sorrow."

"How did she do this, Miriam?"

"She knelt at His feet as He sat at table; she poured out upon them a flood of tears; she wiped them with her luxurious hair, she kissed them fervently, and she anointed them with rich perfume."

"And what was the result?"

"She was defended by Jesus against the carping gibes of His host; she was told that she was forgiven on account of her love, and was dismissed with kindest comfort."

"And what became of her?"

"When on Calvary He was crucified, two women were privileged to stand close to Him; Mary the sinless, and Mary the penitent: to show how unsullied and repentant love may walk hand in hand, beside Him who said that He had 'come to call not the just, but sinners to repentance.'"

No more was said that night. Miriam, fatigued with her exertion, sank into a placid slumber. Fabiola sat by her side, filled to her heart's brim with this tale of love. She pondered over it again and again; and she still saw more and more how every part of this wonderful system was consistent. For if Miriam had been ready to die for her, in imitation of her Saviour's love, so had she been as ready to forgive her, when she had thoughtlessly injured her. Every Christian, she now felt, ought to be a copy, a representative of his Master; but the one that slumbered so tranquilly beside her was surely true to her model, and might well represent Him to her.

When, after some time, Miriam awoke, she found her mistress (for her patent of freedom was not yet completed) lying at her feet, over which she had sobbed herself to sleep. She understood at once the full meaning and merit of this self-humiliation; she did not stir, but thanked God with a full heart that her sacrifice had been accepted.

Fabiola, on awaking, crept back to her own couch, as she thought, unobserved. A secret, sharp pang it had cost her to perform this act of self-abasement; but she had thoroughly humbled the pride of her heart. She felt for the first time that her heart was Christian.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

MIRIAM'S HISTORY.

THE next morning, when Dionysius came, he found both patient and nurse so radiant and happy, that he congratulated them both on having had a good night's rest. Both laughed at the idea; but concurred in saying that it had been the happiest night of their lives. Dionysius was surprised, till Miriam, taking the hand of Fabiola, said:

"Venerable priest of God, I confide to your fatherly care this catechumen, who desires to be fully instructed in the mysteries of our holy faith, and to be regenerated with the waters of eternal salvation."

"What!" asked Fabiola, amazed, "are you more than a physician?"

[†] Isaiah vii. 14.

"I am, my child," the old man replied; "unworthily I hold likewise the higher office of a priest in God's Church."

Fabiola unhesitatingly knelt before him, and kissed his hand. The priest placed his right hand upon her head, and said to her:

"Be of good courage, daughter; you are not the first of your house, whom God has brought into His holy Church. It is now many years since I was called in here, under the guise of a physician, by a former servant now no more; but in reality it was to baptize, a few hours before her death, the wife of Fabius."

"My mother!" exclaimed Fabiola. "She died immediately after giving me birth. And did she die a Christian?"

"Yes; and I doubt not that her spirit has been hovering about your life by the side of the angel who guards you, guiding you unseen to this blessed hour. And, before the throne of God, she has been unceasing in her supplications on your behalf."

Joy tenfold filled the breasts of the two friends; and after arrangements had been made with Dionysius for the necessary instructions and preparations for Fabiola's admission to baptism, she went up to the side of Miriam, and taking her hand, said to her in a low, soft voice:

"Miriam, may I from henceforth call you sister?" A pressure of the hand was the only reply which she could give.

With their mistress, the old nurse, Euphrosyne, and the Greek slave, placed themselves, as we now say, under instruction, to receive baptism on Easter-eve. Nor must we forget one who was already enrolled in the list of catechumens, and whom Fabiola had taken home with her and kept, Emerentiana, the foster-sister of Agnes. It was her delight to make herself useful, by being the ready messenger between the sick-room and the rest of the house.

During her illness, as her strength improved, Miriam imparted many particulars of her previous life to Fabiola; and as they will throw some light on our preceding narrative, we will give her history in a continuous form.

Some years before our story commenced, there lived in Antioch a man who, though not of ancient family, was rich, and moved in the highest circles of that most luxurious city. To keep his position, he was obliged to indulge in great expense; and from want of strict economy, he had gradually become oppressed with debt. He was married to a lady of great virtue, who became a Christian, at first secretly, and afterwards continued so, with her husband's reluctant consent. In the meantime, their two children, a son and daughter, had received their domestic education under her care. The former, Orontius, so called from the favorite stream which watered the city, was fifteen when his father first discovered his wife's religion. He had learnt much from his mother of the doctrines of Christianity, and had been with her an attendant on Christian worship; and hence he possessed a dangerous knowledge, of which he afterwards made so fatal a use.

But he had not the least inclination to embrace the doctrines or adopt the practices, of Christianity; nor would he hear of preparing for baptism. He was wilful and artful, with no love for any restraint upon his passions, or for any strict morality. He looked forward to distinction in the world, and to his full share in all its enjoyments. He had been, and continued to be, highly educated; and besides the Greek language, then generally spoken at Antioch, he was acquainted with Latin, which he spoke readily and gracefully, as we have seen, though with a slight foreign accent. In the family, the vernacular idiom was used with servants, and often in familiar conversation. Orontius was not sorry when his father removed him from his mother's control, and insisted that he should continue to follow the dominant and favored religion of the state.

As to the daughter, who was three years younger, he did not so much care. He deemed it foolish and unmanly to take much trouble about religion; to change it especially, or abandon that of the empire, was, he thought, a sign of weakness. But women being more imaginative, and more under the sway of the feelings, might be indulged in any fancies of this sort.

Accordingly he permitted his daughter Miriam, whose name was Syrian, as the mother belonged to a rich family from Edessa, to continue in the free exercise of her new faith. She became, in addition to her high mental cultivation, a model of virtue, simple and unpretending. It was a period, we may observe, in which the city of Antioch was renowned for the learning of its philosophers, some of whom were eminent as Christians.

A few years later, when the son had reached manhood, and had abundantly unfolded his character, the mother died. Before her end, she had seen symptoms of her husband's impending ruin; and, determined that her daughter should not be dependent on his careless administration, nor on her son's ominous selfishness and ambition, she secured effectually, from the covetousness of both, her own large fortune, which was settled on her daughter. She resisted every influence, and every art, employed to induce her to release this property, or allow it to merge in the family resources, and be made available towards relieving their embarrassments. And on her death-bed, among other solemn parental injunctions, she laid this on her daughter's filial sense of duty, that she never would allow, after coming of age, any alteration in this arrangement.

Matters grew worse and worse; creditors pressed; property had been injudiciously disposed of: when a mysterious person, called Eurotas, made his appearance in the family. "No one but its head seemed to know him; and he evidently looked upon him as at once a blessing and a curse, the bearer both of salvation and of ruin.

The reader is in possession of Eurotas's own revelations; it is sufficient to add, that being the elder brother, but conscious that his rough, morose, and sinister character did not fit him for sustaining the position of head of the family and administering quietly a settled property, and having a haughty ambition to raise his house into a nobler rank, and increase even its riches, he took but a moderate sum of money as capital, vanished for years, embarked in the desperate traffic of interior Asia, penetrated into China and India, and came back home with a large fortune, and a collection of rare gems, which helped his nephew's brief career, but misguided him to ruin in Rome.

Eurotas, instead of a rich family, into which to pour superfluous wealth, found only a bankrupt house to save from ruin. But his family pride prevailed; and after many reproaches, and bitter quarrels with his brother, but concealed from all else, he paid off his debts by the extinction of his own capital, and thus virtually became master of his brother's property, and of the entire family.

After a few years of weary life, the father sickened and died. On his death-bed, he told Orontius that he had nothing to leave him, that all that he had lived on for some years, the very house over his head, belonged to his friend Eurotas, whose relationship he did not further explain, whom he must look up to entirely for support and guidance. The youth thus found himself while full of pride, ambition, and voluptuousness, in the hands of a cold-hearted, remorseless, and no less ambitious man, who soon prescribed as the basis of mutual confidence, absolute submission to his will, while he should act in the capacity of an inferior, and the understood principle, that nothing was too great or too little, nothing too good or too wicked to be done, to restore family position and wealth.

To stay at Antioch was impossible after the ruin which had overtaken the house. With a good capital in hand, much might be done elsewhere. But now, even the sale of all left would scarcely cover the liabilities discovered after the father's death. There was still untouched the sister's fortune; and both agreed that this *must* be got from her. Every artifice was tried, every persuasion employed, but she simply and firmly resisted; both in obedience to her mother's dying orders, and because she had in view the establishment of a house for consecrated virgins, in which she intended to pass her days. She was now of legal age to dispose of her own property. She offered them every advantage that she could give them: pro-

posed that for a time they should all live together upon her means. But this did not answer their purpose; and when every other course had failed, Eurotas began to hint, that one who stood so much in their way should be got rid of at any cost.

Orontius shuddered at the first proposal of the thought. Eurotas familiarized him gradually with it, till—shrinking yet from the actual commission of fratricide—he thought he had almost done something virtuous, as the brothers of Joseph imagined they did, by adopting a slower and less sanguinary method of dealing with an obnoxious brother. Stratagem and unseen violence, of which no law could take cognizance, and which no one would dare reveal, offered him the best chance of success.

Among the privileges of Christians in the first ages, we have already mentioned that of reserving the Blessed Eucharist at home for domestic communion. We have described the way in which it was enfolded in an *orarium*, or linen cloth, again often preserved in a richer cover. This precious gift was kept in a chest (*arca*) with a lid, as St. Cyprian has informed us.* Orontius well knew this; and he was moreover aware that its contents were more prized than silver and gold; that, as the Fathers tell us, to drop negligently a crumb of the consecrated bread was considered a crime;† and that the name of “pearl,” which was given to the smallest fragment,‡ showed that it was so precious in a Christian’s eye, that he would part with all he possessed to rescue it from sacrilegious profanation.

The scarf richly embroidered with pearls, which has more than once affected our narrative, was the outer covering in which Miriam’s mother had preserved this treasure; and her daughter valued it both as a dear inheritance, and as a consecrated object, for she continued its use.

One day, early in the morning, she knelt before her ark; and after fervent preparation by prayer, proceeded to open it. To her dismay she found it already unlocked, and her treasure gone! Like Mary Magdalen at the sepulchre, she wept bitterly, because they had taken her Lord, and she knew not where they had laid Him.§ Like her, too, “as she was weeping she stooped down and looked” again into her ark, and found a paper, which in the confusion of the first glance she had overlooked.

It informed her that what she sought was safe in her brother’s hands, and might be ransomed. She ran at once to him, where he was closeted with the dark man, in whose presence she always trembled; threw herself on her knees before him, and entreated him to restore what she valued more than all her wealth. He was on the point of yielding to her tears and supplications, when Eurotas fixed his stern eye upon him, overawed him, then himself addressed her, saying:

“Miriam, we take you at your word. We wish to put the earnestness and reality of your faith to a sufficient test. Are you truly sincere in what you offer?”

“I will surrender any thing, all I have, to rescue from profanation the Holy of Holies.”

“Then sign that paper,” said Eurotas, with a sneer.

She took the pen in her hand, and after running her eye over the document, signed it. It was a surrender of her entire property to Eurotas. Orontius was furious when he saw himself overreached, by the man to whom he had suggested the snare for his sister. But it was too late; he was only the faster in his unsparing gripe. A more formal renunciation of her rights was exacted from Miriam, with the formalities required by the Roman law.

For a short time she was treated soothingly; then hints be-

gan to be given to her of the necessity of moving, as Orontius and his friend intended to proceed to Nicomedia, the imperial residence. She asked to be sent to Jerusalem, where she would obtain admission into some community of holy women. She was accordingly embarked on board a vessel, the captain of which bore a suspicious character, and was very sparingly supplied with means. But she bore round her neck what she had given proof of valuing, more than any wealth. For, as St. Ambrose relates of his brother Satyrus, yet a catechumen, Christians carried round their necks the Holy Eucharist, when embarking for a voyage.* We need not say that Miriam wore it securely, folded in the only thing of price she cared to take from her father’s house.

When the vessel was out at sea, instead of coasting towards Joppe or any port on the coast, the captain stood straight out, as if making for some distant shore. What his purpose was, it was difficult to conjecture; but his few passengers became alarmed, and a serious altercation ensued. This was cut short by a sudden storm; the vessel was carried at the mercy of the winds for some days, and then dashed to pieces on a rocky island near Cyprus. Like Satyrus, Miriam attributed her reaching the shore in safety to the precious burden which she bore. She was almost the only survivor; at least she saw no other person saved. Those, therefore, that did live besides, on returning to Antioch, reported her death, together with that of the remaining passengers and crew.

She was picked up on the shore by men who lived on such spoil. Destitute and friendless, she was sold to a trader in slaves, taken to Tarsus, on the mainland, and again sold to a person of high rank, who treated her with kindness.

After a short time, Fabius instructed one of his agents in Asia to procure a slave of polished manners and virtuous character, if possible, at any price, to attend on his daughter; and Miriam, under the name of Syra, came to bring salvation to the house of Fabiola.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

BRIGHT DEATH.

It was a few days after the occurrences related in our last chapter but one, that Fabiola was told, that an old man in great anguish, real or pretended, desired to speak with her. On going down to him and asking him his name and business, he replied:

“My name, noble lady, is Ephraim; and I have a large debt secured on the property of the late Lady Agnes, which I understand has now passed into your hands; and I am come, therefore, to claim it from you, for otherwise I am a ruined man!”

“How is that possible?” asked Fabiola in amazement. “I cannot believe that my cousin ever contracted debts.”

“No, not *she*,” rejoined the usurer, a little abashed; “but a gentleman called Fulvius, to whom the property was to come by confiscation; so I advanced him large sums upon it.”

Her first impulse was to turn the man out of the house; but the thought of the sister came to her mind, and she civilly said to him:

“Whatever debts Fulvius has contracted I will discharge; but with only legal interest, and without regard to usurious contracts.”

“But think of the risks I ran, madam. I have been most moderate in my rates, I assure you.”

“Well,” she answered, “call on my steward, and he shall settle all. You are running no risks now at least.”

She gave instructions, accordingly, to the freed-man who managed her affairs, to pay this sum on those conditions, which reduced it to one half the demand. But she soon engaged him in a more laborious task, that of going through the whole of her late father’s accounts, and ascertaining every

* “Cum arcam suam, in qua Domini sanctum fuit, manibus indignis tectasset aperire, igne inde surgente deterrita est, ne auderet attingere.” “When she attempted to open, with unworthy hands, her chest, in which was the holy (body) of our Lord, who was deterred from daring to touch it, by fire rising up from it.” *De Lapsis*.

† See Martenne, *De antiquis Ecclesiarum Ritibus*.

‡ So in the Eastern liturgies. Fortunatus calls the Blessed Eucharist “Corporis Agni margaritum ingens.” “The huge pearl of the body of the Lamb.” *Lib. iii. car. 25*.

§ St. John xxi. 18.

* De morte Satyri.

case of injury or oppression, that restitution might be made. And further, having ascertained that Corvinus had really obtained the imperial rescript, through his father, by which her own lawful property was saved from confiscation, though she refused ever to see him, she bestowed upon him such remuneration as would ensure him comfort through life.

These temporal matters being soon disposed of, she divided her attention between the care of the patient and preparation for her Christian initiation. To promote Miriam's recovery, she removed her, with a small portion of her household, to a spot dear to both, the Nomentan villa. The spring had set in, and Miriam could have her couch brought to the window, or, in the warmest part of the day, could even be carried down into the garden before the house, where, with Fabiola on one side and Emerentiana on the other, and poor Molossus, who had lost all his spirit, at her feet, they would talk of friends lost, and especially of her with whom every object around was associated in their memories. And no sooner was the name of Agnes mentioned, than her old faithful guard would prick up his ears and wag his tail, and look around him. They would also frequently discourse on Christian subjects, when Miriam would follow up, humbly and unpretendingly, but with the warm glow which had first charmed Fabiola, the instructions given by the holy Dionysius.

Thus, for instance, when he had been treating of the virtue and meaning of the sign of the cross to be used in baptism, "whether on the forehead of believers, or over the water, by which they were to be regenerated, or the oil with which, as well as the chrism, they were anointed, or the sacrifice by which they were fed;*" Miriam explained to the catechumens its more domestic and practical use, and exhorted them to practise faithfully what all good Christians did, that is, to make this holy sign upon themselves already, "in the course and at the beginning of every work, on coming in and going out, when putting on their clothes, or sandals, when they washed, sat down to table, lighted their lamp, lay down in bed, or sat on a chair, in whatever conversation they should be engaged."†

But it was observed with pain, by all but Fabiola, that the patient, though the wound had healed, did not gain strength. It is often the mother or the sister that is last to see the slow waste of illness, in child or sister. Love is so hopeful, and so blind! There was a hectic flush on her cheek, she was emaciated and weak, and a slight cough was heard from time to time. She lay long awake, and she desired to have her bed so placed that from early dawn she could look out upon one spot more fair to them all than the richest parterre.

There had long been in the villa an entrance to the cemetery on this road; but from this time it had already received the name of Agnes; for near its entrance had this holy martyr been buried. Her body rested in a *cubiculum* or chamber, under an arched tomb. Just above the entrance into this chamber, and in the middle of the grounds, was an opening, surrounded above by a low parapet, concealed by shrubs, which gave light and air to the room below. Towards this point Miriam loved to look, as the nearest approach she could make, in her infirm health, to the sepulchre of one whom she so much venerated and loved.

Early one morning, beautiful and calm, for it wanted but a few weeks to Easter, she was looking in that direction, when she observed half-a-dozen young men, who on their way to angle in the neighboring Anio, were taking a short cut across the villa, and so committing a trespass. They passed by this opening and one of them, having looked down, called the others.

"This is one of those underground lurking-places of the Christians."

"One of their rabbit-holes into the burrow."

"Let us go in," said one.

"Yes, and how shall we get up again?" asked a second.

This dialogue she could not hear, but she saw what followed

it. One who had looked down more carefully, shading his eyes from the light, called the others to do the same, but with gestures which enjoined silence. In a moment they pulled down large stones from the rock-work of a fountain, close at hand, and threw down a volley of them at something below. They laughed very heartily as they went away: and Miriam supposed that they had seen some serpent or other noxious animal below, and had amused themselves with pelting it.

When others were stirring she mentioned the occurrence, that the stones might be removed. Fabiola went down herself with a few servants, for she was jealous of the custody of Agnes's tomb. What was her distress at finding poor Emerentiana, gone down to pray at her foster-sister's tomb, lying weltering in her blood, and perfectly dead. It was discovered that, the evening before, passing by some Pagan orgies near the river, and being invited to join in them, she had not only refused, but had reproached the partakers in them with their wickedness, and with their cruelties to Christians. They assailed her with stones, and grievously wounded her; but she escaped from their fury into the villa. Feeling herself faint and wounded, she crept unnoticed to the tomb of Agnes, there to pray. She had been unable to move away when some of her former assailants discovered her. Those brutal Pagans had anticipated the ministry of the Church, and had conferred upon her the baptism of blood. She was buried near Agnes, and the modest peasant child received the honor of annual commemoration among the Saints.

Fabiola and her companions went through the usual course of preparation, though abridged on account of the persecution. By living at the very entrance into a cemetery, and one furnished with such large churches, they were enabled to pass through the three stages of catechumenship. First they were *hearers*,* admitted to be present, while the lessons were read; then *kneelers*,† who assisted at a portion of the liturgical prayers; and lastly *elect*, or *petitioners*‡ for baptism.

Once in this last class, they had to attend frequently in church, but more particularly on the three Wednesdays following the first, the fourth, and the last Sundays in Lent, on which days the Roman Missal yet retains a second collect and lesson, derived from this custom. Any one perusing the present rite of baptism in the Catholic Church, especially that of adults, will see condensed into one office what used to be anciently distributed through a variety of functions. On one day the renunciation of Satan was made, previous to its repetition just before baptism; on another the touching of the ears and nostrils, or the *Ephpheta*, as it was called. Then were repeated exorcisms, and genuflections, and signings of crosses on the forehead and body,§ breathings upon the candidate, and other mysterious rites. More solemn still was the unction, which was not confined to the head, but extended to the whole body.

The Creed was also faithfully learnt, and committed to memory. But the doctrine of the Blessed Eucharist was not imparted till after baptism.

In these multiplied preparatory exercises the penitential time of Lent passed quickly and solemnly, till at last Easter-eve arrived.

It does not fall to our lot to describe the ceremonial of the Church in the administration of the Sacraments. The liturgical system received its great developments after peace had been gained; and much that belongs to outward forms and splendor was incompatible with the bitter persecution which the Church was undergoing.

It is enough for us to have shown, how not only doctrines and great sacred rites, but how even ceremonies and accessories were the same in the three first centuries as now. If our example is thought worth following, some one will perhaps illustrate a brighter period than we have chosen.

The baptism of Fabiola and her household had nothing to cheer it but purely spiritual joy. The titles in the city were

* St. Aug. Tract. cxviii. in Joan.

† Tertullian (who lived earlier than two hundred years after Christ, and is the oldest Latin ecclesiastical writer) *de Corona Milit.* c. 3.

* Audientes. † Genuflectentes. ‡ Electi and competentes.

§ There will be found, particularly in the baptism of adults, joined with repetitions of the *Our Father*.

all closed, and among them that of St. Pastor with its papal baptistery.

Early, therefore, on the morning of the auspicious day, the party crept round the walls to the opposite side of the city, and following the Via Portuensis, or road that led to the port at the mouth of the Tiber, turned into a vineyard near Caesar's gardens, and descended into the cemetery of Pontianus, celebrated as the resting-place of the Persian martyrs, SS. Abdon and Sennen.

The morning was spent in prayer and preparation, when towards evening the solemn office, which was to be protracted through the night, commenced.

When the time for the administration of baptism arrived, it was indeed but a dreary celebration that it introduced. Deep in the bowels of the earth the waters of a subterranean stream had been gathered into a square well or cistern, from four or five feet deep. They were clear, indeed, but cold and bleak, if we may use the expression, in their subterranean bath, formed out of the *tufa*, or volcanic rock. A long flight of steps led down to this rude baptistery, a small ledge at the side sufficed for the minister and the candidate, who was thrice immersed in the purifying waters.

The whole remains to this day, just as it was then, except that over the water is now to be seen a painting of St. John baptizing our Lord, added probably a century or two later.

Immediately after Baptism followed Confirmation, and then the neophyte, or new-born child of the Church, after due instruction, was admitted for the first time to the table of his Lord, and nourished with the Bread of angels.

It was not till late on Easter-day that Fabiola returned to her villa; and a long and silent embrace was her first greeting of Miriam. Both were so happy, so blissful, so fully repaid for all that they had been to one another for months, that no words could give expression to their feelings. Fabiola's grand idea and absorbing pride, that day was, that now she had risen to the level of her former slave: not in virtue, not in beauty of character, not in greatness of mind, not in heavenly wisdom, not in merit before God; oh! no; in all this she felt herself infinitely her inferior. But as a child of God, as heiress to an eternal kingdom, as a living member of the body of Christ, as admitted to a share in all His mercies, to all the price of His redemption, as a new creature in Him, she felt that she was equal to Miriam, and with happy glee she told her so.

Never had she been so proud of splendid garment as she was of the white robe, which she had received as she came out of the font, and which she had to wear for eight days.

But a merciful Father knows how to blend our joys and sorrows, and sends us the latter when He has best prepared us for them. In that warm embrace which we have mentioned, she for the first time noticed the shortened breath, and heaving chest of her dear sister. She would not dwell upon it in her thoughts, but sent to beg Dionysius to come on the morrow. That evening they all kept their Easter banquet together; and Fabiola felt happy to preside at Miriam's side over a table, at which reclined or sat her own converted slaves, and those of Agnes's household, all of whom she had retained. She never remembered having enjoyed so delightful a supper.

Early next morning, Miriam called Fabiola to her side, and with a fond, caressing manner, which she had never before displayed, said to her:

"My dear sister, what will you do, when I have left you?"

Poor Fabiola was overpowered with grief. "Are you then going to leave me? I had hoped we should live for ever as sisters together. But if you wish to leave Rome, may I not accompany you, at least to nurse you, to serve you?"

Miriam smiled, but a tear was in her eye, as taking her sister's hand, she pointed up towards heaven. Fabiola understood her, and said: "O, no, no, dearest sister. Pray to God, who will refuse you nothing, that I may not lose you. It is selfish, I know; but what can I do without you? And now, too, that I have learnt how much they who reign with Christ

can do for us by intercession, I will pray to Agnes* and Sebastian, to interpose for me, and avert so great a calamity.

"Do get well: I am sure there is nothing serious in the matter; the warm weather, and the genial climate of Campania, will soon restore you. We will sit again together by the spring, and talk over better things than philosophy."

Miriam shook her head, not mournfully, but cheerfully, as she replied:

"Do not flatter yourself, dearest; God has spared me till I should see this happy day. But His hand is on me now for death, as it has been hitherto for life; and I hail it with joy. I know too well the number of my days."

"Oh! let it not be so soon!" sobbed out Fabiola.

"Not while you have on your white garment, dear sister," answered Miriam. "I know you would wish to mourn for me; but I would not rob you of one hour of your mystic whiteness."

Dionysius came, and saw a great change in his patient, whom he had not visited for some time. It was as he had feared it might be. The insidious point of the dagger had curled round the bone, and injured the pleura; and phthisis had rapidly set in. He confirmed Miriam's most serious anticipations.

Fabiola went to pray for resignation at the sepulchre of Agnes; she prayed long and fervently, and with many tears, then returned.

"Sister," she said with firmness, "God's will be done, I entreat you, what would you have me do, after you are taken from me?"

Miriam looked up to heaven, and answered, "Lay my body at the feet of Agnes, and remain to watch over us, to pray to her, and for me; until a stranger shall arrive from the East, the bearer of good tidings."

On the Sunday following, "Sunday of the white garments," Dionysius celebrated, by special permission, the sacred mysteries in Miriam's room, and administered to her the most holy Communion, as her viaticum. This private celebration, as we know from St. Augustine and others, was not a rare privilege.† Afterwards, he anointed her with oil, accompanied by prayer, the last Sacrament which the Church bestows.

Fabiola and the household who had attended these solemn rites, with tears and prayers, now descended into the crypt, and after the divine offices returned to Miriam in their darker raiment.

"The hour is come," said she, taking Fabiola's hand. "Forgive me, if I have been wanting in duty to you, and in good example."

This was more than Fabiola could stand, and she burst into tears. Miriam soothed her, and said, "Put to my lips the sign of salvation when I can speak no more; and, good Dionysius, remember me at God's altar when I am departed."

He prayed at her side, and she replied, till at length her voice failed her. But her lips moved, and she pressed them on the cross presented to her. She looked serene and joyful, till at length raising her hand to her forehead, then bringing it to her breast, it fell dead there, in making the saving sign. A smile passed over her face, and she expired, as thousands of Christ's children have expired since.

Fabiola mourned much over her; but this time she mourned as they do who have hope.

* "Agnes sepulchrum est Romulea in domo,
Fortis puellæ, martyris inclinatæ.
Conspectu in ipso condita turrium
Servat salutem virgo Quiritum;
Necnon et ipsos protegit advenas,
Puro ac fidei pectore supplices."

Prudentius.

† The tomb of Agnes graces Rome,
A maiden brave, a martyr great.
Resting in sight of bastioned gate,
From harm the virgin shields her home;
Nor to the stranger help denies,
If sought with pure and faithful sighs."

† St. Ambrose said mass in the house of a lady beyond the Tiber (Paulinus, in his *Life*, tom. ii. *Oper.* ed. Bened.) St. Augustine mentions a priest's saying mass in a house supposed to be infested with evil spirits. *De Civ. D. lib. xii. c. 8.*

PART THIRD—VICTORY.

CHAPTER I.

THE STRANGER FROM THE EAST.

WE APPEAR to ourselves to be walking in solitude. One by one those whose words and actions and thoughts have hitherto accompanied and sustained us, have dropped off, and the prospect around looks very dreary. But is all this unnatural? We have been describing not an ordinary period of peace and every-day life, but one of warfare, strife, and battle. Is it unnatural that the bravest, the most heroic, should have fallen thick around us? We have been reviving the memory of the cruellest persecution which the Church ever suffered, when it was proposed to erect a column bearing the inscription that the Christian name had been extinguished. Is it strange that the holiest and purest should have been the earliest to be crowned?

And yet the Church of Christ has still to sustain many years of sharper persecution than we have described. A succession of tyrants and oppressors kept up the fearful war upon her, without intermission, in one part of the world or another for twenty years, even after Constantine had checked it wherever his power reached. Dioclesian, Galerius, Maximinus, and Licinius in the East, Maximian and Maxentius in the West, allowed no rest to the Christians under their several dominions. Like one of those rolling storms which go over half the world, visiting various countries with their ravaging energy, while their gloomy foreboding or sullen wake simultaneously overshadow them all, so did this persecution wreak its fury first on one country, then on another, destroying every thing Christian, passing from Italy to Africa, from Upper Asia to Palestine, Egypt, and then back to Armenia, while it left no place in actual peace, but hung like a blighting storm-cloud over the entire empire.

And yet the Church increased, prospered, and defied this world of sin. Pontiff stepped after Pontiff at once upon the footstool of the papal throne and upon the scaffold; councils were held in the dark halls of the catacombs; bishops came to Rome, at risk of their lives, to consult the successor of St. Peter; letters were exchanged between Churches far distant and the supreme Ruler of Christendom, and between different Churches, full of sympathy, encouragement and affection; bishop succeeded bishop in his see, and ordained priests and ministers to take the place of the fallen, and be a mark set upon the bulwarks of the city for the enemy's aim; and the work of Christ's imperishable kingdom went on without interruption, and without fear of extinction.

Indeed it was in the midst of all these alarms and conflicts, that the foundations were being laid of a mighty system, destined to produce stupendous effects in after ages. The persecution drove many from the cities, into the deserts of Egypt, where the monastic state grew up, so as to make "the wilderness rejoice and flourish like the lily, bud forth and blossom, and rejoice with joy and praise."^{*} And so, when Dioclesian had been degraded from the purple, and had died a peevish destitute old man, and Galerius had been eaten up alive by ulcers and worms, and had acknowledged, by public edict, the failure of his attempts, and Maximian Hercules had strangled himself, and Maxentius had perished in the Tiber, and Maximinus had expired amidst tortures inflicted by Divine justice, equal to any he had inflicted on Christians, his very eyes having started from their sockets, and Licinius had been put to death by Constantine; the Spouse of Christ, whom they had all conspired to destroy, stood young and blooming as ever, about to enter into her great career of universal diffusion and rule.

It was in the year 313 that Constantine, having defeated Maxentius, gave full liberty to the Church. Even if ancient writers had not described it, we may imagine the joy and grati-

tude of the poor Christians on this great change. It was like the coming forth, and tearful though happy greeting, of the inhabitants of a city decimated by plague, when proclamation has gone forth that the infection has ceased. For here, after ten years of separation and concealment, when families could scarcely meet in the cemeteries nearest them, many did not know who among friends or kinsfolk had fallen victims, or who might yet survive. Timid at first, and then more courageous, they ventured forth; soon the places of old assembly, which children born in the last ten years had not seen, were cleansed, or repaired, refitted and reconciled,* and opened to public and now fearless worship.

Constantine also ordered all property, public or private, belonging to Christians and confiscated, to be restored; but with the wise provision that the actual holders should be indemnified by the imperial treasury.† The Church was soon in motion to bring out all the resources of her beautiful forms and institutions; and either the existing basilicas were converted to her uses, or new ones were built on the most cherished spots of Rome.

Let not the reader fear that we are going to lead him forward into a long history. This will belong to some one better qualified for the task of unfolding the grandeur and charms of free and unfettered Christianity. We have only to show the land of promise from above, spread like an inviting paradise before our feet; we are not the Josue that must lead others in. The little that we have to add in this brief third part of our humble book, is barely what is necessary for its completion.

We will then suppose ourselves arrived at the year 318, fifteen years after our last scene of death. Time and permanent laws have given security to the Christian religion, and the Church is likewise more fully establishing her organization. Many who on the return of peace had hung down their heads, having by some act of weak condescension escaped death, had by this time expiated their fall by penance; and now and then an aged stranger would be saluted reverently by the passers-by when they saw that his right eye had been burnt out, or his hand mutilated; or when his halting gait showed that the tendons of the knee had been severed, in the late persecution, for Christ's sake.‡

If at this period our friendly reader will follow us out of the Nomentan gate, to the valley with which he is already acquainted, he will find sad havoc among the beautiful trees and flower-beds of Fabiola's villa. Scaffold-poles are standing up in place of the first; bricks, marbles and columns lie upon the latter. Constantia, the daughter of Constantine, had prayed at St. Agnes's tomb, when not yet a Christian, to beg the cure of a virulent ulcer, had been refreshed by a vision, and completely cured. Being now baptized, she was repaying her debt of gratitude by building over her tomb her beautiful basilica. Still the faithful had access to the crypt in which she was buried; and great was the concourse of pilgrims that came from all parts of the world.

One afternoon when Fabiola returned from the city to her villa, after spending the day in attending to the sick, in an hospital established in her own house, the *fossor*, who had charge of the cemetery, met her with an air of great interest and no small excitement, and said:

"Madam, I sincerely believe that the stranger from the East, whom you have so long expected, is arrived."

Fabiola, who had ever treasured up the dying words of Miriam, eagerly asked, "Where is he?"

"He is gone again," was the reply.

The lady's countenance fell. "But how," she asked again, "do you know it was he?" The excavator replied:

"In the course of the morning I noticed, among the crowd, a man not yet fifty, but worn by mortification and sorrow, to premature old age. His hair was nearly grey, as was his long beard. His dress was eastern, and he wore the cloak which

* The ceremony employed after desecration.

† Euseb. H. E. lib. x. c. 5.

‡ In the East, some governors, wearied with wholesale murders, adopted this more merciful way of treating Christians toward the end of the persecution. See Eusebius.

the monks from that country usually do. When he came before the tomb of Agnes, he flung himself upon the pavement with such a passion of tears, such groans, such sobs, as moved all around to compassion. Many approached him, and whispered, 'Brother, thou art in great distress; weep not so, the saint is merciful.' Others said to him, 'We will all pray for thee, fear not.' But he seemed to be beyond comfort. I thought to myself, surely in the presence of so gentle and kind a saint, none ought to be thus disconsolate or heart-broken, except only one man."

"Go on, go on," broke in Fabiola; "what did he next?"

"After a long time," continued the fessor, "he arose, and drawing from his bosom a most beautiful and sparkling ring, he laid it on her tomb. I thought I had seen it before, many years ago."

"And then?"

"Turning round he saw me, and recognized my dress. He approached me, and I could feel him trembling, as, without looking in my face, he timidly asked me, 'Brother, knowest thou if there lie buried anywhere here about a maiden from Syria, called Miriam?' I pointed silently to the tomb. After a pause of great pain to himself, so agitated now that his voice faltered, he asked me again, 'Knowest thou, brother, of what she died?' 'Of consumption,' I replied. 'Thank God!' he ejaculated, with the sigh of relieved anguish, and fell prostrate on the ground. Here too he moaned and cried for more than an hour, then, approaching the tomb, affectionately kissed its cover, and retired."

"It is he, Torquatus, it is he!" warmly exclaimed Fabiola; "why did you not detain him?"

"I durst not, lady; after I had once seen his face, I had not courage to meet his eye. But I am sure he will return again; for he went towards the city."

"He must be found," concluded Fabiola. "Dear Miriam, thou hadst then, this consoling foresight in death!"

CHAPTER II.

THE STRANGER IN ROME.

EARLY next morning, the pilgrim was passing through the Forum, when he saw a group of persons gathered round one whom they were evidently teasing. He would have paid but little attention to such a scene in a public thoroughfare, had not his ear caught a name familiar to it. He therefore, drew nigh. In the centre was a man, younger than himself; but if he looked older than he was, from being wan, and attenuated, the other did so much more from being the very contrary. He was bald and bloated, with a face swelled, and red, and covered with blotches and boils. A drunken cunning swam in his eye, and his gait and tone were those of a man habitually intoxicated. His clothes were dirty, and his whole person neglected.

"Ay, ay, Corvinus," one youth was saying to him, "won't you get your deserts, now? Have you not heard that Constantine is coming this year to Rome, and don't you think the Christians will have their turn about now?"

"Not they," answered the man we have described, "they have not the pluck for it. I remember we feared it, when Constantine published his first edict, after the death of Maxentius, about liberty for the Christians, but next year he puts us out of fear, by declaring all religions to be equally permitted."*

"That is all very well, as a general rule," interposed another, determined further to plague him; "but is it not supposed that he is going to look up those who took an active part in the late persecution, and have the *lex talionis*† executed on them; stripe for stripe, burning for burning, and wild beast for wild beast?"

"Who says so?" asked Corvinus, turning pale.

* Eusebius, *ubi sup.*

† The law of retaliation, such as was prescribed also in the Mosaic law, "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth," &c.

"Why, it would surely be very natural," said one youth.

"And very just," added another.

"Oh, never mind," said Corvinus, "they will always let one off for turning Christian. And, I am sure, I would turn any thing, rather than stand—"

"Where Pancratius stood," interposed a third, more malicious.

"Hold your tongue," broke out the drunkard, with a tone of positive rage. "Mention his name again, if you dare!" And he raised his fist, and looked furiously at the speaker.

"Ay, because he told you how you were to die," shouted the youngster, running away. "Heigh! Heigh! a panther here for Corvinus!"

All ran away before the human beast, now lashed into fury, more than they would have done from the wild one of the desert. He cursed them, and threw stones after them.

The pilgrim, from a short distance, watched the close of the scene, then went on. Corvinus moved slower along the same road, that which led towards the Lateran basilica, now the Cathedral of Rome. Suddenly a sharp growl was heard, and with it a piercing shriek. As they were passing by the Coliseum, near the dens of the wild beasts, which were prepared for combats among themselves, on occasion of the emperor's visit, Corvinus, impelled by the morbid curiosity natural to persons who consider themselves victims of some fatality, connected with a particular object, approached the cage in which a splendid panther was kept. He went close to the bars, and provoked the animal, by gestures and words; saying: "Very likely, indeed, that you are to be the death of me! You are very safe in your den." In that instant, the enraged animal made a spring at him, and through the wide bars of the den, caught his neck and throat in its fangs, and inflicted a frightful lacerated wound.

The wretched man was picked up, and carried to his lodgings, not far off. The stranger followed him, and found them mean, dirty, and uncomfortable in the extreme; with only an old and decrepit slave, apparently as sottish as his master, to attend him. The stranger sent him out to procure a surgeon, who was long in coming; and, in the meantime, did his best to stanch the blood.

While he was so occupied, Corvinus fixed his eyes upon him with a look of one delirious, or demented.

"Do you know me?" asked the pilgrim, soothingly.

"Know you? No—yes. Let me see—Ha! the fox! my fox! Do you remember our hunting together those hateful Christians. Where have you been all this time? How many of them have you caught?" And he laughed outrageously.

"Peace, peace, Corvinus," replied the other. "You must be very quiet, or there is no hope for you. Besides, I do not wish you to allude to those times; for I am myself now a Christian."

"You a Christian?" broke out Corvinus savagely. "You who have shed more of their best blood than any man? Have you been forgiven for all this? Or have you slept quietly upon it? Have no furies lashed you at night? no phantoms haunted you? no viper sucked your heart? If so, tell me how you have got rid of them all, that I may do the same. If not, they will come, they will come! Vengeance and fury! why should they not have tormented you as much as me?"

"Silence, Corvinus; I have suffered as you have. But I have found the remedy, and will make it known to you, as soon as the physician has seen you, for he is approaching."

The doctor saw him, dressed the wound, but gave little hope of recovery, especially in a patient whose very blood was tainted by intemperance.

The stranger now resumed his seat beside him, and spoke of the mercy of God, and His readiness to forgive the worst of sinners; whereof he himself was a living proof. The unhappy man seemed to be in a sort of stupor; if he listened, not comprehending what was said. At length his kind instructor, having expounded to him the fundamental mysteries of Christianity in hope, rather than certainty, of being attended to, said:

"And now, Corvinus, you will ask me how is forgiveness to

be applied to one who believes all this? It is by baptism, by being born again of water and the Holy Ghost."

"What?" exclaimed the sick man, loathingly.

"By being washed in the laver of regenerating water."

He was interrupted by a convulsive growl rather than a moan. "Water! water! no water for me! Take it away!" And a strong spasm seized the patient's throat.

His attendant was alarmed, but sought to calm him. "Think not," he said, "that you are to be taken hence in your present fever, and to be plunged into water" (the sick man shuddered and moaned); "in clinical baptism,* a few drops suffice, not more than is in this pitcher." And he showed him the water in a small vessel. At the sight of it, the patient writhed and foamed at the mouth, and was shaken by a violent convulsion. The sounds that proceeded from him resembled a howl from a wild beast more than any utterance of human lips.

The pilgrim saw at once that hydrophobia, with all its horrible symptoms, had come upon the patient from the bite of the enraged animal. It was with difficulty that he and the servant could hold him down at times. Occasionally he broke out into frightful paroxysms of blasphemous violence against God and man. And then, when this subsided, he would go on moaning thus:

"Water they want to give me! water! water! none for me! It is fire! fire! that I have, and that is my portion. I am already on fire, within, without! Look how it comes creeping up, all around me, it advances every moment nearer and nearer!" And he beat off the fancied flame with his hands on either side of his bed, and he blew at it around his head. Then turning toward his sorrowful attendants, he would say, "Why don't you put it out? you see it is already burning me."

Thus passed the dreary day, and thus came the dismal night, when the fever increased, and with it the delirium, and the violent accessions of fury, though the body was sinking. At length he raised himself up in bed, and looking with half-glazed eyes straight before him, he exclaimed in a voice choked with bitter rage:

"Away, Pancratius, begone! Thou hast glared on me long enough. Keep back thy panther! Hold it fast; it is going to fly at my throat. It comes! Oh!" And with a convulsive grasp, as if pulling the beast from off his throat, he plucked away the bandage from his wound. A gush of blood poured over him, and he fell back a hideous corpse upon the bed.

His friend saw how unrepenting persecutors died.

CHAPTER III.

AT LAST.

THE next morning the pilgrim proceeded to discharge the business which had been interfered with by the circumstances related in the preceding chapter. He might have been first seen busily employed inquiring after some one, about the Januses in the Forum. At length the person was found; and the two walked toward a dirty little office under the Capitol, on the ascent called the *Clivus Asyli*. Old musty books were brought out, and searched column after column, till they came to the date of the "Consuls Dioclesian Augustus, the eighth time, and Maximian Hercules Augustus, the seventh time."† Here they found sundry entries with reference to certain documents. A roll of mouldy parchments of that date was produced, docketed as referred to, and the number corresponding to the entries was drawn out and examined. The result of the investigation seemed perfectly satisfactory to both parties.

"It is the first time in my life," said the owner of the den, "that I ever knew a person who had got clear off, come back, after fifteen years, to inquire after his debts. A Christian, I presume, sir?"

"Certainly, by God's mercy."

* Clinical baptism, or that of persons confined to their beds, was administered by pouring or sprinkling the water on the head. See Bingham, book xl. c. 11.

† A. D. 303.

"I thought as much; good morning, sir. I shall be happy to accommodate you at any time, at as reasonable rates as my father Ephraim, now with Abraham. A great fool that for his pains, I must say, begging his pardon," he added, when the stranger was out of hearing.

With a decided step and a brighter countenance than he had yet displayed, he went straight to the villa on the Nomentan way; and after again paying his devotions in the crypt, but with a lighter heart, he at once addressed the fossor, as if they had never been parted: "Torquatus, can I speak with the Lady Fabiola?"

"Certainly," answered the other; "come this way."

Neither alluded, as they went along, to old times, nor to the intermediate history of either. There seemed to be an understanding, instinctive to both, that all the past was to be obliterated before men, as they hoped it was before God. Fabiola had remained at home that and the preceding day, in hopes of the stranger's return. She was seated in the garden close to a fountain, when Torquatus, pointing to her, retired.

She rose, as she saw the long-expected visitor approach, and an indescribable emotion thrilled through her, when she found herself standing in his presence.

"Madam," he said, in a tone of deep humility and earnest simplicity, "I should never have presumed to present myself before you, had not an obligation of justice, as well as many of gratitude, obliged me."

"Orontius," she replied,—"is this the name by which I must address you?" (he signified his assent) "you can have no obligations towards me, except that which our great Apostolic charges on us, that we love one another."

"I know you feel so. And therefore I would not have pretended, unworthy as I am, to intrude upon you for any lower motive than one of strict duty. I know what gratitude I owe you for the kindness and affection lavished upon one now dearer to me than any sister can be on earth, and how you discharged towards her the offices of love which I had neglected."

"And thereby sent her to me," interposed Fabiola, "to be my angel of life. Remember, Orontius, that Joseph was sold by his brethren, only that he might save his race."

"You are too good, indeed, towards one so worthless," resumed the pilgrim; "but I will not thank you for your kindness to another who has repaid you so richly. Only this morning I have learnt your mercy to one who could have no claim upon you."

"I do not understand you," observed Fabiola.

"Then I will tell you all plainly," rejoined Orontius. "I have now been for many years a member of one of those communities in Palestine, of men who live separated from the world in desert places, dividing their day, and even their night between singing the Divine praises, contemplation, and the labor of their hands. Severe penance for past transgressions, fasting, mourning, and prayer form the great duty of our penitential state. Have you heard of such men here?"

"The fame of holy Paul and Anthony is as great in the West as in the East," replied the lady.

"It is with the greatest disciple of the latter that I have lived, supported by his great example, and the consolation he has given me. But one thought troubled me, and prevented my feeling complete assurance of safety, even after years of expiation. Before I left Rome I had contracted a heavy debt, which must have been accumulating at a frightful rate of interest, till it reached an overwhelming amount. Yet it was an obligation deliberately contracted, and not to be justly evaded. I was a poor cenobite,* barely living on the produce of the few palm-leaf mats that I could weave, and the scanty herbs that would grow in the sand. How could I discharge my obligations?"

"Only one means remained. I could give myself up to my creditor as a slave, to labor for him and endure his blows and scornful reproaches in patience, or to be sold by him for my value, for I am yet strong. In either case, I should have had

* Religious who lived in community, or common life, were so called.

my Saviour's example to cheer and support me. At any rate, I should have given up all that I had—myself.

"I went this morning to the Forum, found my creditor's son, examined his accounts, and found that you had discharged my debt in full. I am, therefore, your bondsman, Lady Fabiola, instead of the Jew's." And he knelt humbly at her feet.

"Rise, rise," said Fabiola, turning away her weeping eyes. "You are no bondsman of mine, but a dear brother in our common Lord."

Then sitting down with him, she said: "Orontius, I have a great favor to ask from you. Give me some account of how you were brought to that life, which you have so generously embraced."

"I will obey you as briefly as possible. I fled, as you know, one sorrowful night from Rome, accompanied by a man—and his voice choked him.

"I know, I know whom you mean—Eurotas," interrupted Fabiola.

"The same, the curse of our house, the author of all mine, and my dear sister's, sufferings. We had to charter a vessel at great expense from Brundisium, whence we sailed for Cyprus. We attempted commerce and various speculations, but all failed. There was manifestly a curse on all that we undertook. Our means melted away, and we were obliged to seek some other country. We crossed over to Palestine, and settled for a while at Gaza. Very soon we were reduced to distress; every body shunned us, we knew not why; but my conscience told me that the mark of Cain was on my brow."

Orontius paused and wept for a time, then went on:

"At length, when all was exhausted, and nothing remained but a few jewels, of considerable price indeed, but with which, I knew not why, Eurotas would not part, he urged me to take up the odious office of denouncing Christians; for a furious persecution was breaking out. For the first time in my life I rebelled against his commands, and refused to obey. One day he asked me to walk out of the gates; we wandered far, till we came to a delightful spot in the midst of the desert. It was a narrow dell, covered with verdure, and shaded by palm-trees; a little clear stream ran down, issuing from a spring in a rock at the head of the valley. In this rock we saw grottoes and caverns; but the place seemed uninhabited. Not a sound could be heard but the bubbling of the water.

"We sat down to rest, when Eurotas addressed me in a fearful speech. The time was come, he told me, when we must both fulfil the dreadful resolution he had taken, that we must not survive the ruin of our family. Here we must both die; the wild beasts would consume our bodies, and no one would know the end of its last representatives.

"So saying, he drew forth two small flasks of unequal sizes, handed me the larger one, and swallowed the contents of the smaller.

"I refused to take it, and even reproached him for the difference of our doses; but he replied that he was old, and I young; and that they were proportioned to our respective strengths. I still refused, having no wish to die. But a sort of demoniacal fury seemed to come over him; he seized me with a giant's grasp, as I sat on the ground, threw me on my back, and exclaiming, 'We must both perish together,' forcibly poured the contents of the phial, without sparing me a drop, down my throat.

"In an instant, I was unconscious; and remained so, till I awoke in a cavern, and faintly called for drink. A venerable old man, with a white beard, put a wooden bowl of water to my lips. 'Where is Eurotas?' I asked. 'Is that your companion?' inquired the old monk. 'Yes,' I answered. 'He is dead,' was the reply. I know not by what fatality this had happened; but I bless God with all my heart, for having spared me.

"That old man was Hilarion, a native of Gaza, who, having spent many years with the holy Anthony in Egypt, had that year returned to establish the cenobitic and eremitical life in his own country, and had already collected several disciples.

They lived in the caves hard by, and took their refecton under the shade of those palms, and softened their dry food in the water of that fountain.

"Their kindness to me, their cheerful piety, their holy lives, won on me as I recovered. I saw the religion which I had persecuted in a sublime form; and rapidly recalled to mind the instructions of my dear mother, and the example of my sister; so that yielding to grace, I bewailed my sins at the feet of God's minister,* and received baptism on Easter-eve."

"Then we are doubly brethren, nay twin children of the Church; for I was born to eternal life, also, on that day. But what do you intend to do now?"

"Set out this evening on my return. I have accomplished the two objects of my journey. The first was to cancel my debt; my second was to lay an offering on the shrine of Agnes. You will remember," he added, smiling, "that your good father unintentionally deceived me into the idea, that she coveted the jewels I displayed. Fool that I was! But I resolved, after my conversion, that she should possess the best that remained in Eurotas's keeping; so I brought it to her."

"But have you means for your journey?" asked the lady timidly.

"Abundant," he replied, "in the charity of the faithful. I have letters from the Bishop of Gaza, which secure me every where sustenance and lodging; but I will accept from you a cup of water and a morsel of bread, in the name of a disciple."

They rose, and were advancing towards the house, when a woman rushed madly through the shrubs, and fell at their feet, exclaiming, "Oh, save me! dear mistress, save me! He is pursuing me, to kill me!"

Fabiola recognized, in the poor creature, her former slave Jubala, but her hair was grizzly and dishevelled, and her whole aspect bespoke abject misery. She asked whom she meant.

"My husband," she replied; "long has he been harsh and cruel, but to-day he is more brutal than usual. Oh, save me from him!"

"There is no danger here," replied the lady; "but I fear, Jubala, you are far from happy. I have not seen you for a long, long time."

"No, dear lady, why should I come to tell you of all my woes? Oh, why did I ever leave you and your house, where I ought to have been so happy? I might then with you, and Graja, and good old departed Euphrosyne, have learnt to be good myself, and have embraced Christianity!"

"What, have you really been thinking of this, Jubala?"

"For a long time, lady, in my sorrows and remorse. For I have seen how happy Christians are, even those who have been as wicked as myself. And because I hinted this to my husband this morning, he has beaten me, and threatened to take my life. But, thank God, I have been making myself acquainted with Christian doctrines, through the teaching of a friend."

"How long has this bad treatment gone on, Jubala?" asked Orontius, who had heard of it from his uncle.

"Ever," she replied, "since soon after marriage, I told him of an offer made to me previously, by a dark foreigner, named Eurotas. Oh! he was, indeed, a wicked man, a man of black passions and remorseless villainy. Connected with him, is my most racking recollection."

"How was that?" asked Orontius, with eager curiosity.

"Why, when he was leaving Rome, he asked me to prepare for him two narcotic potions; one for any enemy, he said, should he be taken prisoner. This was to be certainly fatal; another had to suspend consciousness for a few hours only should he require it for himself.

"When he came for them, I was just going to explain to him, that, contrary to appearances, the small phial contained fatally concentrated poison, and the large one a more diluted and weaker dose. But my husband came in at the moment and in a fit of jealousy thrust me from the room. I fear son

*Confession of sins in private was made before baptism. *Bingham, Or. Hist.* b. xi. ch. viii. § 14.

mistake may have been committed, and that unintentional death may have ensued."

Fabiola and Orontius looked at one another in silence, wondering at the just dispensations of Providence; when they were aroused by a shriek from the woman. They were horrified at seeing an arrow quivering in her bosom. As Fabiola supported her, Orontius, looking behind him, caught a glimpse of a black face grinning hideously through the fence. In the next moment a Numidian was seen flying away on his horse, with his bow bent, Parthian-wise over his shoulder, ready for any pursuer. The arrow had passed, unobserved, between Orontius and the lady.

"Jubala," asked Fabiola, "dost thou wish to die a Christian?"

"Most earnestly," she replied.

"Dost thou believe in One God in Three Persons?"

"I firmly believe in all the Christian Church teaches."

"And in Jesus Christ, who was born and died for our sins?"

"Yes, in all that you believe." The reply was more faint.

"Make haste, make haste, Orontius," cried Fabiola, pointing to the fountain.

He was already at its basin, filling full his two hands, and coming instantly, poured their contents on the head of the poor African, pronouncing the words of baptism; and, as she expired, the water of regeneration mingled with her blood of expiation.

After this distressing, yet consoling, scene, they entered the house, and instructed Torquatus about the burial to be given to this doubly-baptized convert.

Orontius was struck with the simple neatness of the house, so strongly contrasting with the luxurious splendor of Fabiola's former dwelling. But suddenly his attention was arrested, in a small inner room, by a splendid shrine or casket, set with jewels, but with an embroidered curtain before it, so as to allow only the frame of it to be seen. Approaching nearer, he read inscribed on it,

"THE BLOOD OF THE BLESSED MIRIAM, SHED BY CRUEL HANDS!"

Orontius turned deadly pale; then changed to a deep crimson; and almost staggered.

Fabiola saw this, and going up to him kindly and frankly, placed her hand upon his arm, and mildly said to him:

"Orontius, there is that within, which may well make us both blush deeply, but not therefore despond."

So saying she drew aside the curtain, and Orontius saw within a crystal plate, the embroidered scarf so much connected with his own, and his sister's history. Upon it were lying two sharp weapons, the points of both which were rusted with blood. In one he recognized his own dagger; the other appeared to him like one of those instruments of female vengeance, with which he knew heathen ladies punished their attendant slaves.

"We have both," said Fabiola, "unintentionally inflicted a wound, and shed the blood of her, whom now we honor as a sister in heaven. But for my part, from the day when I did so, and gave her occasion to display her virtue, I date the dawn of grace upon my soul. What say you, Orontius?"

"That I, likewise, from the instant that I so misused her, and led to her exhibition of such Christian heroism, began to feel the hand of God upon me, that has led me to repentance and forgiveness."

"It is thus ever," concluded Fabiola. "The example of our Lord has made the martyrs; and the example of the martyrs leads us upwards to Him. Their blood softens our hearts; His alone cleanses our souls. Theirs pleads for mercy; His bestows it."

"May the Church, in her days of peace and of victories, never forget what she owes to the age of her martyrs. As for us two, we are indebted to it for our spiritual lives. May many, who will only read of it, draw from it the same mercy and grace!"

They knelt down, and prayed long together silently before the shrine.

They then parted, to meet no more.

After a few years, spent by Orontius in penitential fervor, a green mound by the palms, in the little dell near Gaza, marked the spot where he slept the sleep of the just.

And after many years of charity and holiness, Fabiola withdrew to rest in peace, in company with Agnes and Miriam.

THE END.

THE AUSTRALIAN DUKE,

OR

THE NEW UTOPIA.

CHAPTER I.

GRANT.

IT was a bright morning, in the early part of July, when I found myself in a railway carriage that was whirling me rapidly from the Great Babylon for the short three weeks' holiday which was all I could snatch from the law. I was about to spend them in my old home at Oakham, where my father filled the post of steward and man of business to the noble family who owned the Oakham domain.

Oakham Park was the great place, *par excellence*, of the country; its princely mansion, its woods and gardens were things to see; and few illustrious foreigners, in the shape of Shahs or Czarowitchs, left England without enjoying the hospitality dispensed there in right royal style. In early boyhood a run with the Oakham foxhounds had ranked foremost among my home pleasures; and the support of the great family's parliamentary interest was about the first idea which had been presented to me in later life, among the duties of graver years.

Ten years of busy life in London law-courts had, indeed, somewhat dwarfed the importance of Oakham in my present estimation; and, moreover, changes had been at work by which the influence once exercised by its owners in the country had considerably diminished. The old ducal family had become extinct, and the property had passed to a younger branch whose presence was almost felt as an intrusion by those who remembered the days of "the old duke." Still, after the absence of a year or two, during which I had generally contrived that my scanty holidays should be spent in a continental ramble, the prospect of revisiting my boyhood's home was reawakening the old associations; and as I mused over past and present the images of early days began to reassume their old proportions, and to exert their former influence over my mind.

My companions in the carriage were three in number, of whom two had established themselves in corner compartments, and were absorbed in the study of their dailies. The third, clad in a plain gray suit, had nothing special to indicate his rank, or call for observation; but in a minute or so I found myself involuntarily scanning him afresh, a proceeding I was the better able to accomplish from the fact that his eyes, fixed on the passing landscape, were never once turned towards me. I could hardly say what there was to justify my glance of curious inspection, if it were not the stillness of his head, and the passive, self-forgetfulness of his attitude. As to the others, they were of the ordinary class of English railway travellers. Having painfully done his duty with the morning paper, the younger of the two attempted to open conversation with his opposite neighbor by the remark that, "Mayflower seemed to have made all the running," to which the elder replied by a grunted affirmative which seemed to indicate that the animal in question had not greatly consulted his interests by her unexpected success. He did not seem of a conversational turn, and the young man's next attempt was on the stranger in gray.

"Country badly wants rain, sir," he said, as though commenting on the attention which the other was bestowing on the fields and dusty hedge-rows.

"Does it, indeed?" was the reply. "To me everything looks so green." Then, as by way of explanation: "When you are used for half the year to see everything baked to brick-dust, England looks like a huge cabbage-garden."

"May-be," returned the other, pointing to a well-timbered bit of ground we were then just passing; "and yet I hardly know the country in Europe that could show cabbages out as those."

"Ah!" was the reply, "perhaps so; I know very little of Europe."

The chance words fell on my ear, and I proceeded to draw

a somewhat hasty conclusion that my friend in gray must be a Yankee.

Meanwhile, the elder gentleman was engaged in folding his paper into the smallest possible compass, with the view of ultimately disposing of it in his coat pocket, observing, as he did so, that "they seemed to have got a good working majority," and the words at once unlocked our tongues and gave us a common subject of interest. It was the moment of a great political crisis; a once popular ministry had split to pieces, a general election had just placed the reins of power in the hands of the Conservative party, and according to their respective views men were everywhere startled or jubilant over the unexpected shifting of the scenes.

"They will have it all their own way for the present," I observed; "and released from more serious cares, Hapirock can take his own time at demolishing the Pope."

"Yes," said the first speaker; "how long it will last remains to be seen, but for a time we shall have a strong Tory Government."

"And what will they do?" asked the Yankee (if such he were), in a tone of grave and genuine interest, which contrasted not a little with the careless, off-hand manner of his companions.

"Do? Well, I suppose they'll give the beer-shops a lift; you know they owe it to them that they've got their innings. Then there's Clause 26—safe for a year or two; and I suppose the farmers will get some sort of a sop, and promise of more. Then we shall spend a lot of money, and have a jolly fight over the Budget; and there's talk about Law Reform; I suppose that is about our programme for the next session."

"You are not serious?"

"I am indeed."

"Yes," I observed, as he glanced towards me for confirmation of the other's accuracy; "changes in government don't come to much in England; and no man when he is in power can really do what he talks about in opposition. The new men will find it so, and they know it as well as we."

"It is incomprehensible," said the man in grey, speaking rather to himself than to any of the party; "what a contemptible system!"

The two politicians stared at him, and then at one another; it was clear that he and they revolved in different mental orbits. Further conversation was, however cut short by the stoppage of the train, the inevitable inspection of tickets, and the scrambling exit of the two travellers, whose places were not filled up, so that when the train once more started, the stranger and myself were left *tete-a-tete*.

"You are not familiar with our English politics?" I began. "The fact is that with us parties differ rather in name than in principle."

"Principle!" he repeated, for the first time bending on me a pair of dark eyes, so singularly expressive that I involuntarily started under their gaze, "Do you really think such a thing exists? And then such a want of power—no strength, no firm hold of anything."

"Well, I don't know," I replied; "law is power with us. We don't cling to this man or that, and we are not always raising barricades for ideas, but we keep the laws."

"And who makes them?" he inquired.

"The people," I replied.

"The people; yes, that is to say that those who are to be governed govern; is that a fair statement?"

"Well, I suppose it is."

"Well, then, I repeat, there is no power in that. The laws won't do it, that is clear, it must be the work of individuals."

"What is he thinking of?" I asked myself, in surprise. "What is it that the laws won't do? I suspect that he's some American doctrinaire that has come over to the old country to pick holes in our ways and make capital out of abusing us." Yet his eyes still haunted me.

By this time he was consulting his Bradshaw. "Perhaps," he said, with a courtesy of manner which put my suspicions to the blush. "perhaps you can tell me if we are near the Oakham Station?"

"The next but one," I replied. And I began to wonder what could be taking him thither. For be it known, dear reader, that the Oakham Station was what one might call a private one. The parliamentary influence of the Dukes of Leven, the old proprietors of the property, had succeeded in placing it in the midst of their plantations at a convenient half-mile from their own mansion, and a most inconvenient three miles from the village which clustered outside their park gates. It was seldom resorted to, save by guests of the great family, and occasional farmers journeying to and from market. My companion was not of the latter class, and I began to speculate whether he might not be of the former; an illustrious somebody, for whom I should find the Oakham carriage waiting, and the porters at a white heat of civility.

Nothing of the sort, however, met our gaze as we descended on the trim little platform. My father's dog-cart, with the well-known face of Jem the gardener, prepared to take possession of my bag and portmanteau, was the solitary equipage in view, and the gray traveller looked about him in some perplexity.

"How far to Oakham?" he inquired of the porter.

"Park, sir, or village? Village, three miles and a half, sir; Park, close at hand."

"Oh, then, I can walk; but what will happen to my portmanteau?"

"Well, sir, you see, sir, bus don't meet this train, it don't, sir; leave it in the cloak-room, sir, and bus will call for it at seven. Where might you be going sir?"

"Well, I suppose, there's an inn of some sort?"

"Oh, sure, sir, White Lion; bus will take it there, sir, all right." And he was leaving the station when I caught his eye.

"You'll have a dusty walk to the village by the road," I said; "through the plantation it's barely two miles, and a precious deal pleasanter. Jem shall show you the way; or, I say, Jem, is my father at home?"

"No, sir, no one at home; it's court day at Bradford, and master couldn't put it off no how; but he'll be back at seven."

"In that case," I said, throwing the reins into his hands, "I will walk part of the way with the gentleman, and you can take his luggage on with mine, and leave it at the White Lion." And in another minute, Jem and the dog cart were lost in a cloud of dust, and I and my unknown companion had struck into the pleasant shade of a thick fir plantation.

"I am truly grateful," he began; "yet you are not altogether the loser by the transaction. After the dust and rattle of that steam-monster this green twilight is something worth living for. So," he continued, as we emerged from the trees on the brow of a green slope that overlooked a broad expanse of park scenery, terminating with a view of the lordly mansion, "this is Oakham!"

There was a softness, a melody in his tones that struck to my heart. He stood there gazing on every feature in the scene with an earnest interest, speaking now and then more to himself than to me, whose presence he hardly seemed to notice. "Yes, I understand it better now; beautiful indeed, most beautiful; this is England!"

"You are a stranger, I perceive, to English scenery," I said; "travellers from America generally find everything so small compared to their own magnificent scale of natural beauty, that it is difficult to get them to admire a home-scene like this."

"Probably, but I have never visited America. I see what set you on that idea," he continued, smiling, "it was that word about *Europe*. But I am an Englishman born, though I have passed the best part of my life in Australia, never visiting my

native country but once since I could walk alone, and then only in a passing way."

"And you find it beautiful?"

"Much more than that: the wilderness is *beautiful*, but this has what the wilderness can never give—life, human life, souls." And his eye glanced towards the tapering spire of the village church, whence came at that moment, the toll of the funeral bell. "And this Oakham family, has it much hold on the neighborhood?"

"Pretty well," I said, "not what the old dukes had, I fancy. You see, there have been changes; the Dukes of Leven were popular, but they broke up some years back, and the present proprietors, the Earls of Bradford, a younger branch of the same family, don't reside here much, though, of course, they lead the county."

"Ah! you folk at home are always thinking of the county and parliament; I did not mean that. I was thinking of the people, the tenantry; there must be hundreds dependent on a place like this."

"Of course; I believe they are considered good landlords, but you see now-a-days classes are so distinct, and the railways take country gentlemen away so much from their own place; ties of the kind to which you allude are almost things of the past."

"More's the pity," he said, with a sigh; "but hark! is not that water, and falling water too; have you cascades in these parts?"

"Not exactly a Niagara," laughing; "but there is a fall on this river, a stone-cast from here, if you care to explore it." And so saying, I led the way through the thickets, pushing aside the bushes, till we were able to look down into a deep wooded glen, where the little stream which ran through the park did its best to ape the manners of a waterfall. Though the stream itself was in miniature, the height at which we stood above it was considerable, and wishing to place my companion in the best position for commanding the view, I was making my way over some jutting pieces of slippery rock, when he called me to stop in a somewhat peremptory manner. "All right," I replied; but the words had scarcely passed my lips when I found it was all wrong. A treacherous stone gave way under my foot, and but for a projecting branch, at which I caught, I should have been precipitated into the torrent. Even as I hung suspended, I was unable to regain my footing, as the sudden shock had twisted an ankle, and for the moment rendered me helpless. One steady step forward, a keen glance, a firm arm thrown around me, and with a prompt and skilful movement the stranger had lifted me from my position of peril and placed me in safety on the bank. Then those dark, earnest eyes once more met mine with a look of kind solicitude.

"You should have trusted an old bushranger like me," he said; "I saw your footing was failing you. But you really are not able to stand—and you came out of your way to do me a pleasure."

"Oh, it is nothing," I said; "it isn't really a sprain, just a twist, and I am close at home." For indeed my father's house stood in the plantations overlooking the glen, and with the help of my new friend's arm ten minutes' walk brought me to the garden gate. There he took his leave, and we shook hands as though no longer strangers.

"Perhaps," he said, taking a letter from his pocket-book, "you can confer a last favor on me by telling me where this is to be delivered?"

I glanced at the address: *John Aubrey, Esq., Oakham*. "My father!" I exclaimed; "I will give it to him myself on his return, and as you now know my name, I may, perhaps, venture to ask that of my deliverer."

"*Deliverer* is a large word for so small a service," he replied, smiling; "but my name is Grant. I shall venture to call on Mr. Aubrey to-morrow."

In another moment he was gone, and turning to the house, I soon found myself in the midst of home greetings.

CHAPTER II.

OAKHAM AND ITS MASTERS.

The Grange, as the steward's house at Oakham was called, was a modest, comfortable residence, picturesque in appearance and situation; for, from the parsonage to the gamekeeper's cottage all the Oakham surroundings were expected to be in perfect taste, and the estate was remarkable for its ornamental buildings. My father had filled his present post in the time of the old family, whose memory he venerated with something of an old man's regret. My mother and only sister, the latter my junior by several years, completed the little family party, whose members were now for a brief space reunited, and whom I will introduce to the reader as briefly as may be, for my story concerns my new friend rather than myself. It was a family of the commonplace English middle-class, with nothing about it that a novelist's utmost effort could push into the romantic. My mother was just what every man's mother is, or ought to be, at least to his individual heart, the best mother in the world. She had many practical interests associated with my father's position on the estate, and when, in addition to this, I add that she liked her garden and her poultry, and that she deliberately considered her husband to be the best man in the county, and her son the cleverest, my reader will have sufficient data wherewith to estimate her merits. As to my sister Mary, she was a sensible, good-natured girl of two-and-twenty. Besides the usual methods of getting through her mornings (and I have often speculated on what those are with the majority of young ladies), Mary had occupations of her own among the village people, and was perfectly familiar with every old Betty in the neighborhood who wanted a flannel petticoat. She was not a profound reader, neither was she Ritualistic, for both which facts I inwardly blessed her; but there were daily prayers at the parish church, and before I came down to an eight o'clock breakfast I knew that my sister had walked across the Park to the early morning service.

That evening, as I sat in the midst of the little home circle, I told my adventures, and produced Mr. Grant's letter. My father opened it and read it aloud; it ran as follows:

"DEAR MR. AUBREY, My friend, Mr. Grant, the bearer of this, is making a short stay in England, and is desirous of seeing what he can of Oakham. I shall esteem it a kindness if you will enable him to do so, and will show him my attention.—Faithfully yours,

"JOHN RIPLEY."

Sir John Ripley was the county member, and his letter of introduction at once set at rest the question of Grant's respectability. Who or what he might be we could not guess, but he was certainly no adventurer. The earl was in Scotland; his two sons yachting off the Isle of Wight; there was, therefore, no difficulty in complying with the request that my friend should thoroughly inspect the Oakham lions, and we agreed to beat up his quarters on the morrow. Accordingly, at ten o'clock, my father and I presented ourselves in the little parlor of the White Lion, where Grant received us with simple courtesy, and did not fail to satisfy himself as to the state of my ankle before consenting to set out for the Park. It was the first time I had seen him uncovered, and I could not fail to be struck by the broad forehead and well-set head which imparted a dignity to features otherwise ordinary. My father's hearty country manner seemed to please him, and we were soon under the broad avenue which led to the mansion, conversing with little of the embarrassment of strangers.

I shall not detain the reader with a lengthened description of what may be found better set forth in the Oakham Guide Book. The fountains and gardens, the forcing-houses, and pineries and graperies; grapes in every stage of development, so as to keep up an uninterrupted supply from May to October, by means of cunning contrivances for regulating the artificial heat; flowers of dazzling hues and bizarre forms from Mexico and Brazil; orchids from Ceylon, and the newest lilies transported from the interior of Africa; all these were displayed as much to claim our wonder as our admiration. We passed from hot-houses that breathed the atmosphere of the tropics to cool conservatories with fountains playing upon marble floors. The head-gardener was in attendance, and made our brain dizzy

with the names of each new floral prodigy, whilst Grant, with unmoved features, looked and listened in silence.

When the gardens had been fully inspected, my father proposed that we should proceed to the house. I thought I detected an expression of reluctance on the part of my companion, as though he shrank from the examination of private apartments in the absence of their owners.

"Is no one really at home?" he inquired; then glancing around him, "What a waste of labor! Well, let us get through the business;" and he followed my father into the great entrance hall, and up the grand staircase, adorned with pictures, and statues, and Majolica vases filled with fragrant exotics. Thence we passed through suites of softly-carpeted apartments glittering with all that was most rare and delicate, and finally into the great picture gallery, on the walls of which hung portraits of the present family, mingled with those of the elder ducal branch that had passed away.

My father did the office of cicerone, and pointed out the first founder of the family, a Lord Treasurer of the Caroline period, and other worthies of civil and military renown, till he came with a sigh to a finely-painted portrait, the beau-ideal of an English country gentleman as Lawrence alone could paint him.

"There is the old duke himself," he said, "and a finer gentleman than he never rode to cover. And a great man, too, he was in Parliament; for in his father's lifetime he sat for the county as Lord Carstairs, and when the Great Bill passed, it was he that led the county gentlemen, and by his sole influence caused them to grant the famous *Carstairs clause*. He could carry anything and anybody with him, there was such a power about him. But the crash came at last, and Oakham never saw another duke within these walls."

"Then, if I understand you, he left no son?" said Grant.

"No, that was not it," said my father; "but it's a sad story," and as he spoke he sat down on a fauteuil in one of the windows, and motioned us to do the same. "He had a son, young Carstairs, a fine young fellow who cut a figure at Oxford. Well do I remember, and all the county remembers too, his coming of age; why, it was here in this gallery that the duke, standing on a dais, received the Mayor of Bradford, and the county magistrates, and presented them his son, as a king might present his heir-apparent to a nation. But all he did was in that princely style; no thought of expense. Why, when the queen paid him a three days' visit here, the house was newly furnished from garret to cellar! You may guess what that took out of the year's rents. But he never stopped to calculate figures, not he. And when the Russian Emperor came over, and the people in London were on their mettle to give him a handsome reception, the old duke had him down here, and I fancy he puzzled him rarely. There were over sixty guests sat down each day to dinner; and when they went to the Bradford races, each gentleman was asked to choose his own equipage, barouche, or phaeton, green or claret color, black or bay horse, or whatever he chose, and it was ready. Well, of course, I know it was reckless extravagance, but you see it was all of a piece with the duke's character—so open-handed and munificent, I often warned him it could not last; but he never would take alarm. 'You find the money, Aubrey,' he would say, 'and I'll spend it.'"

"He was popular," said Grant.

"Popular? I should rather think so! A kind word for everyone, and then such a noble presence. But the crash came at last, as I said, and it fairly broke him. When at last the creditors could be held off no longer, he looked into his affairs, and it was just ruin, bankruptcy, beggary. Young Carstairs behaved splendidly; consented to the entail being cut off, and Oakham sold. The younger, that is the Bradford branch of the Carstairs family, had raked together a lot of money with their coal mines and iron, and they bought it up; the money paid most of the debts, not all, and Carstairs, noble fellow as he was, made over the Irish estates he held from his mother into the hands of the creditors. They offered him £500 a year if he would reside there and manage the property for them, but his father's friends, who were then in power, got him

an appointment in India, or something of the sort, and he preferred to go."

"And the old duke?"

"His daughters took him to Baden—you see they had a little money of their own—and he died there two years after the break-up at Oakham. Then Lady Harriet married an Austrian count, and the elder sister followed her father; none ever returned to England."

Grant and I listened with interest: the story was familiar enough to me, but it seemed to gain a new kind of pathos, as I heard it in that gallery before the very portrait of the last Duke of Leven. Grant said nothing, but, stepping to the window, looked out for a while in silence; I thought it was to conceal an emotion which few men care to exhibit to one another; but when at last he spoke, his words struck me as harsh and severe.

"It was right," he said. "It was just that it should be so. There was nothing to regret."

"Ah, well, young sir," said my father, "that is the view you take of it, but the break-up of a great family can never be anything but a calamity in the land. That is how I see it; and Oakham, with all its modern finery, has never been the same place to me since the change."

We left the gallery in silence, for my father's words had saddened us, and I was glad to change the subject by proposing that we should look into the great library, rich in its collection of ancient and modern literature, for some of the Leven family had been antiquarians and book-collectors, and the Oakham MSS. had a European celebrity.

A gentleman in clerical costume was standing at the window, with whom, on our entrance, my father shook hands, introducing him as "Our vicar, Mr. Edwards." I knew him well; he was a reading man, of whom people liked to say that he was a "scholar and a gentleman." He was just then busy over a laborious compilation on the Roman antiquities of the county, and had the free run of the Oakham library, and a handsome salary as librarian.

Grant looked around him at the well-filled shelves: "Five thousand volumes, isn't it so?" I said.

"About that, exclusive of the manuscripts, and half as many more again in the Bradford collection," replied the vicar. And he pointed to the half-open door of an adjoining apartment.

"Plenty of other men's thoughts here," said Grant; "but it would bother me to have to use them."

"To each one his proper gift," replied the vicar, with a courteous gesture, expressive of the least possible admixture of conscious superiority. "You are a man of action, no doubt, but human thought has its own work to do, and books are its chronicles."

"Well, give me a book that will make me think," responded Grant; "but what I find in your civilized society is, that you make your books, or rather your newspapers and reviews, think for you. As to books, no man that I have yet met in England reads them. He reads his *Pall Mall* or his *Saturday*, and they do the work of literary and philosophic digestion for him; much as the Red Indian squaws chew the meat for their lords and husbands."

"Then you think," I observed, "that the multiplication of books has not been over-friendly to intellect?"

"I have no pretensions to judge on the subject," he replied; "but I am sure of this, that no one who had five thousand volumes within reach of his arm-chair could ever guess what a man feels in the bush, who has nothing but his Virgil and his Bible."

"The Bible!" I ejaculated; "our men of culture, as the Germans would say, are beginning to say queer things about that piece of literature."

"Precisely so," he replied, "and it proves my point, that your culture is an enormous humbug."

My father looked at his watch. "I believe I must leave you young gentlemen to settle your argument together," he said: "I must be at the home farm by one o'clock; but Jack

will show you what remains to be seen out of doors; and my wife will be expecting you at dinner."

"Much obliged," said Grant; "but I ordered my dinner at the Lion."

"Then the Lion may eat it," said my father. "Look here, sir, Sir John will never forgive me if I leave a friend of his to be smoke-dried in the village tavern; you must take up your quarters with us while you stay at Oakham; and, Jack, you will see about his things being brought down to the Grange."

Jack was myself, and exceedingly willing I was to second the motion that our new friend should make his stay among us. I began to feel a singular liking for him. After the atmosphere of London clubs and law-courts the contact with a mind so fresh and out-spoken, and so free from the shackles of conventionality, was inexpressibly agreeable.

"You are exceedingly good," he replied, "but my outfit is much more in keeping with the Lion's Den than with Mrs. Aubrey's drawing-room."

"Stuff and nonsense, man," said my father; "Mrs. Aubrey is used to every variety of costume; it is a settled thing, then. Jack will bring you home to dinner, and if Mr. Edwards would favor us——"

"Most happy," said that gentleman; "and I shall hope by-and-by to see Mr. Grant at the parsonage."

There were a few parting bows, and we left the library. My father's cob was waiting at the door to carry him to the farm, but Grant detained him. "Just see here, Mr. Aubrey," he said, whilst a certain look of perplexity appeared on his countenance, "I don't feel sure about this business. You see, you know nothing about me."

The extreme simplicity of his words and manner, contrasting as it did with so many an evidence that the speaker was not an ordinary man, had a singular charm about it, and my father felt it. "I know that you saved Jack here from breaking his bones yesterday," he replied, "and that you are Sir John Ripley's friend, and anything more you can tell us if you like after dinner;" and with a farewell gesture, my father cantered off, and Grant and I returned to the White Lion to arrange for his transfer to the Grange.

CHAPTER III.

THE GRANGE.

GRANT WAS accordingly admitted into our unpretending family circle, and he seemed to like it. It did not take long to make him at home, and I fancied that his manner grew less abrupt, and his philosophic utterances less harsh and conscientious, as his heart expanded in the kindly atmosphere around him.

Mr. Edwards kept his engagement, and our dinner passed pleasantly enough. I could see by my mother's looks and manner that she approved of my new acquaintance; nor did this surprise me, for he exhibited a marked respect in his manner towards her, not unmingled with a kind of tenderness.

"How often I have pictured such a scene as this!" he said to me, as we emerged from the dining-room window on to the lawn, still bright with an everlasting sunlight, and studded with its beds of scarlet geraniums. "After the intolerable affectation of those pineries and graperies, this little belt of shrubbery and reasonable flower-garden is a positive refreshment."

"Mary will feel flattered," I replied, as we approached my sister, who was loitering among the flower beds. "Mr. Grant was extolling the superiority of our garden over that of the Earl of Bradford." Mary gave an incredulous smile, but Grant vehemently protested that he was in earnest;

"My mother will be in raptures at the news," said Mary, "in her heart I know she considers her fuschias and petunias quite equal to Mr. Jones's orchids, only she don't dare to say so; but with so judicious a critic as Mr. Grant to back her, I fear for her humility."

"What I mean is this," said Grant: "this acre and a half of

pleasure ground and the paddock beyond it, a man can take in and make his own; I daresay Miss Aubrey has raked every border, and my friend Jack has ere this climbed every tree within its boundaries. Well, that makes you at home with them all; but imagine climbing any of Mr. Jones's Brazilian evergreens, or pruning one of his vines!"

"I don't suppose the Earl of Bradford would desire to accomplish either of those feats," said Mary; "he is content to see the grapes sent up for his London dinner-parties, and for the rest to enjoy the reputation of having the finest collection of tropical plants in England."

"Yes," said the vicar, who at that moment joined us, "it must be owned he turns his coal-pits to some account. Wonderful how these Bradford collieries are paying just now," he continued, addressing my father; "and the strikes in the north keep up the price of iron."

"Whereabouts are these said collieries?" said Grant; "not surely in this neighborhood?"

"Oh, yes," said Mary; "you are not to suppose that our county is all made up of pineries and graperies; we produce a frightful amount of coal and iron not twelve miles from Oakham."

"And a strange contrast it is," said the vicar, "to get in here at the Oakham station, and find yourself in half an hour at Bradford."

Grant looked inquiringly.

"Perhaps you have no coal districts in Australia," said Mary; "if so, such a place as Bradford would be a novelty to you. Well, really, I wouldn't mind the ash-pits, if it were not for the women and children."

This truly feminine epitome of the social state of Bradford did not greatly enlighten our visitor, and I hastened to aid his intelligence. "Bradford is a place," I said, "where men work three days in the week, and get drunk the other four; where the wages are paid on Saturday evening in the public-houses, and spent before the men go to work again on Wednesday morning; and where husbands usually kick their wives to death, and daughters as well as sons work in the coal-pits."

"Too true," said my father; "there were five kicking cases, only last sessions, and all connected with drunkenness."

"And you tell me this new government of ours is going to support the public-houses?" said Grant.

"Bound to do it, it's the licensed victuallers' interest that returned them."

"I'd see the licensed victuallers at Old Nick first," said Grant.

"Then, my dear sir, you'd never get a majority."

"And this is the way you get your legislators," he cried, with vehemence, "a fine promise for the legislation."

"I take it, my dear sir," chimed in the vicar, with that distinct, harmonious pronunciation which marked him for an Oxonian, "I take it that legislation can never practically touch this question. Increase of education, a spread of general intelligence among our laborers and artisan classes will, in time, no doubt, effect a change; but we cannot make men moral by Act of Parliament."

"I fancy," I remarked, "that one can help them to be immoral, and our legislation on this question undoubtedly tends that way."

"A curious fact was stated in the debates the other night," said my father, "that in five dioceses in Ireland the public-houses regularly closed on Sundays by the voluntary determination of the people."

"That is the influence of the Roman Catholic priesthood," said Mr. Edwards; "a totally different state of things from anything among ourselves."

Grant rubbed his hands in a sort of ecstasy. "Exactly what I always say," he exclaimed, "personal influence will effect what your favorite law will never bring about. Now, if the Irish bishops and pariah clergy can close the public-houses in Ireland on Sunday by their personal influence, why don't your Lord Bradfords and your Bishops of Exborough, and your excellent Vicars of Oakham (no offence, Mr. Edwards) come

down on the Bradford pot-houses, and put a stop to all these villainies?"

"Why, indeed," said Mary, gravely, "I have often asked myself that question."

"My dear Miss Aubrey," protested the vicar, "the cases are totally different."

"Really, Grant," I exclaimed, "Your plan is an original one. Conceive our good bishop evangelizing the publicans, and bringing in the secular arm to aid him, in the person of Lord Bradford!"

"But why not?" persisted Grant.

"First and foremost," I replied, "because the publicans are staunch supporters of Church and State, and you couldn't expect their lordships to extirpate their natural allies."

Mr. Edwards cleared his throat. "Isn't that rather a strong expression, my dear Mr. John? I suppose the licensed victuallers are none the worse for upholding our venerable constitution?"

"And how do they uphold it?" I said; "I haven't yet forgotten the Bradford banners."

Mr. Edwards cleared his throat again, and was hesitating for a reply, when Grant demanded an explanation. "Oh," I said, "it was at the last general election. The Radicals had got up the cry for 'Unsectarian Schools,' whilst the other party went in for 'Sound Scriptural Education.' So what did they do but get banners inscribed in big gold letters, '*Beer and the Bible; our National Drink and our National Religion.*'"

By this time, Mr. Edwards had recovered his presence of mind. "Very improper, of course, and extremely bad taste, to say the least," he said; "but you will remember the whole thing was disowned by the Conservative Committee."

"Oh, I know that," I replied; "but, notwithstanding their repudiation of the banners, they would find it difficult after that to lead a crusade against the beer-shops."

Whilst thus talking, we had sauntered to a spot commanding an extensive view over the surrounding country. In the distance rose the granite peaks of Leven Moor, divided from us by a tract of undulating and highly-cultivated land, along which white puffs of smoke from time to time revealed the presence of the Exborough and Bradford Railway.

"That is a famous view," I observed; "it gives just what one always wants, both sides of a question."

"What question?" said Mary.

"Well, everything; there's the moor, which makes you long for a free life in the wilderness, safe out of reach of beer and Bradford; and there's the express train to pull you back to common sense and duty."

"Duty!" said Grant; "it's a wonderful word. Have you ever thought, Miss Aubrey, what an odd time we should have of it, if every one took to doing their duty?"

"Why odd?" said Mary. "I wish with all my heart we did it."

"Well, but follow it up, and see what would come of it," said Grant.

Mary, who had no great capacity for "following things up," looked a little perplexed, so I came to her rescue. "What would come of it?" I asked.

"A universal social revolution," was the reply.

"I hope not," said poor Mary; "I've a horror of the very word."

Grant smiled, but persisted that it would be so. "Just consider: there would be no crimes, and therefore no police; no wars, and therefore no standing armies; nothing to punish, and so no prisons; very little poverty, so probably no work-houses."

"I beg to differ from you in that view," said Mr. Edwards; "poverty would exist if we were all saints to-morrow."

"I didn't say no poverty," said Grant, "but much less of it, and quite of another kind. It would not be squalid, or degrading, or abject poverty if the rich did their duty."

"And what is doing our duty?" said Mary, "because hadn't we better do it instead of talking about it?"

* This incident actually occurred at the late General Election.

"Exactly what I was going to say," I exclaimed; "for any practical result of our argument, we must have a precise definition of duty."

Mr. Edwards looked as if he was naturally expected to furnish this definition. "I presume," he said, "that each man's conscience must prescribe its own line of duty."

"Fidelity to conscience," said my father; "yes, that's a safe rule, and it has a good English ring about it."

Still Grant kept silence.

"With all deference, my dear father," I said, "I don't think it fully meets the requirement. Mr. Grant will smile if I go back to my old ground; but we want a fixed law to direct our conscience."

"It is conscience which supplies the law," said Edwards.

"What if my conscience prompts me to shoot the Prime Minister?" I inquired.

"That would be a false conscience, of course," he replied, "which no man would be justified in following."

"But there's the difficulty; there must be something or somebody to tell me that it is false, and, if so, it is that *something* or somebody that gives me the rule of duty."

Edwards found himself in a difficulty, and was not unwilling to shift it on to the shoulders of another. "It was Mr. Grant who first started this elaborate discussion," he said, politely; "perhaps he will give us his solution of the question?"

"Yes, pray do," said Mary, "or we shall get no tea this evening."

Grant looked a little confused. "It seems simple enough," he said, without raising his eyes from a rosebud which he was deliberately picking to pieces; "I suppose there's the Gospel."

"Quite so," ejaculated Mr. Edwards, much relieved; "of course, there's the Gospel."

"But, dear me! don't we follow the Gospel?" said Mary.

"I'm not so sure that we do," replied Grant; "at least a good deal of it. How about the Sermon on the Mount, for example? I can't at this moment call to mind any instance among my own acquaintance of people offering their left cheek when they've been struck on the right, or giving their cloak to those who have taken away their coat."

"Literal interpretations ——" began the vicar.

"Which if everybody followed there would be very little work for us lawyers,"

"Precisely what I started with saying," cried Grant; "that if everyone simply did his duty, or, if you like it better, if everyone followed the letter of the Gospel, the result would be a universal social revolution. If every owner of a demesne like this, for instance, did his duty according to this view, I take it we should not have quite so many Bradfords."

My father laid his hand on his shoulder. "My dear young friend," he said, "you are young, and have many very generous feelings, I am sure; but when you have lived a little longer in this world of ours, you will find what a difference there is between the theoretical and the practical."

It was nice of my father to say this, and sounded kind and sensible; but, as we went in to tea, I felt that Grant had not had his answer.

"You will see our parish church to-morrow, Mr. Grant," said my dear mother, who presided at the tea-table; "it is one of the sights of Oakham."

"Ah, hem! yes," said Grant; "Mr. Edwards has been so kind; but to-morrow I expect I shall go to Bradford."

"To-morrow! to Bradford?" I exclaimed, setting down my untasted teacup on its saucer.

"Yes, I suppose there's a ten o'clock train, isn't there?" he asked composedly.

"Our morning service is at half-past ten," said Mary, in a low tone, whilst Mr. Edwards contented himself with a significant silence.

"Has my description of Bradford proved so attractive that you cannot defer your visit till Monday?" I inquired.

Poor Grant looked somewhat badgered, but he was incapable of an evasion. "Being Sunday," he said, with something of

an effort, "one must hear mass, and I believe Bradford is the nearest Catholic church."

There was a moment of dead silence; Mary looked grave, my mother frightened, and it was my father at last who came to the rescue. "All right, Mr. Grant; yes, there's a Catholic chapel there; you see we didn't know, weren't aware—hem!—I suppose there are a good many Catholics in Australia?"

By this time Grant had recovered from his embarrassment, and the simple dignity of the man made itself felt in his answer: "I am afraid I have startled you all by my announcement; but I really couldn't help it. I told you you did not know whom you were inviting."

"Pshaw! my dear sir," cried my father; "on these matters every one suits himself, and Mr. Edwards will not mind showing you his church on Monday."

"I consider it an engagement," said the vicar, in his most Oxonian tone; "and I trust Mr. Grant will not suppose that our difference of sentiment on immaterial points is any obstacle to our agreement in essentials."

"I am no controversialist," said Grant, "and I should really like to see your church—for many reasons."

This was a happy way of escaping from a difficulty; and the vicar taking his leave, his departure was followed by another interval of silence. I saw that Grant was concealing a full heart under an exterior of composure, and presently those earnest eyes were raised, and turned upon us. "I feel, Mr. Aubrey," he said, addressing my father, "as if I ought not to be sitting here, enjoying your kind hospitality, without telling you a word of myself or my history. Not that there is anything worth telling," he continued, smiling, as he noticed a certain look of anxiety on my dear mother's countenance, "for really I am not a returned convict. But in admitting a stranger to your family circle, you show me a confidence of which I feel I am unworthy."

"Nothing wrong, my boy, is there?" said my father; he had taken a great liking to Grant, and as he spoke his voice betrayed it.

"No, my dear sir; but at Oakham this morning you challenged me to tell you something more about myself, and if you still wish it, I will do so."

"Shall we go?" said my mother, rising.

"By no means, dear madam," said Grant, laughing. "My story after all is much like that of the needy knife-grinder; but such as it is, you shall hear it."

We settled ourselves down to listen, and Grant began his story.

CHAPTER IV.

GRANT'S STORY

"My father belonged to what you in England would call a good family; we don't know much of those distinctions in the bush, but he was a gentleman by birth, a University man, and of good connections. He married in his own rank of life, and soon after the time of his marriage, family troubles obliged him to leave England. I don't need to say anything more about these affairs just now, except that they had nothing to do with character. Bayard himself was not more unstained in reputation than my dear father."

"He went to India first of all, but could not stand the climate, and removed to Australia. He had his wife's little fortune, about ten thousand pounds, and with it he bought a large tract of land in Queensland, and stocked it with sheep. A very different sort of place from Oakham, Miss Aubrey—grassy hills and valleys, no trees, open downs, and a good broad stream or two, but none of your English woods or gardens. There was only one thing to do, and that was to make wool; and in a year or two he got on, took more land and more sheep, and made more wool—that was his business. When a man has a good many thousand sheep to feed, he wants shepherds; and then there's the killing, and skinning, and packing the wool. So by degrees he got a good many fellows into his employment, for he paid them well, and was a kind master. The men respected

him, they knew he could be bold as well as kind. More than once he captured a party of bushrangers, and saved his stock from their depredations; and our rough settlers felt him to be more than a good neighbor or a good master—they gathered round him as a protector.

"I have said that my father was a University man, and something of a fine scholar. He had brought with him a fair stock of books, and as time allowed him, he did his best to carry on my education. At twelve years old, I fancy I had mastered about as much Latin and Greek as I should have learnt in the same time at Harrow; and, besides that, I had gained a good many morsels of useful knowledge, better acquired in the bush. But my father could only teach me what he knew himself, and of some things he was ignorant. You see, my dear lady," said Grant, addressing my mother, "I shouldn't like to say anything that would give you pain, or seem, as it were, bumptious, and for a fellow like me to be talking about such things would just be nonsense; but still you know, it isn't always piety and that sort of thing that a man gets at the University. My father never got into any awkward scrapes; he became a good hand at the classics, and a famous rower. He spent as much money as became his rank, and a good deal more than suited his father's pocket; but as to religion, I fancy he shared it with Socrates. His standard was honor; to speak the truth, because it was the truth; to be brave, and courteous, and just, and merciful, and to be all that because nothing else was worthy of a gentleman. Of course I learnt my catechism, my mother taught me that; and she read me stories out of the Bible, in which I delighted: all about Jacob and the patriarchs, and the flocks of sheep; it seemed just like our own life in the bush, and I fancied every bushman was an Edomite.

"Well, one day, as we were sitting down to supper, there came word that old Mike, the shepherd, was dying, and that Biddy, his wife, was at the door, and would not go till she had seen the master. My father got up and went to her. 'Oh, wirra, wirra, that I should see the day!' she said; 'there's Mike dyin', and askin' for the priest, and sorra a priest is there within sixty miles, and him at Ballarat!'

"A priest, Biddy!" said my father; "what good would he do your husband if he could see him? More to the purpose if he could see a doctor."

"What good is it, your honor? Why he'd get the rites of the Church, the cratur, and not be dyin' like a haythen or a Jew."

"To make a long story short, Biddy so moved my father's kind heart, that he sent off a man and horse to Ballarat to fetch a priest, and the priest came in time to give poor Mike all he wanted, so that he died like a Christian.

"My father entertained the priest as a matter of course; and, when it was all over, Father Daly said he would like to ride the country round, and see if there were any others who might chance to want him. Well, it was wonderful the number he found who were, and would be, or ought to have been Catholics; for three days, as poor Biddy said, 'he was baptizin' and marryin' and buryin' people for the bare life,' and at the end of the third day he came to my father. 'Mr. Grant,' he said, 'I've a great favor to ask of you, which I'm sure, for these poor fellows' sake, you won't refuse.'

"Anything in reason," said my father; "what is it you wish for?"

"Why, a barn, or a store, or a place of some sort, where I can say mass to-morrow morning."

"Well, a barn was found, and Father Daly was at work half the night knocking and hammering, till he had got up what did for an altar. He had brought all he wanted with him; poor enough it all was; but next day he said mass, and all the settlers within twenty miles, Catholics and Protestants, were present at it. For it was seldom enough they got a good word from priest or parson, and so, poor fellows, they cared for it when they got it; and get it they did. Just after the Gospel Father Daly turned round and addressed us. It was simple enough, nothing eloquent, nothing of fine preaching;

just a few plain words, telling us that what we had got to do in the world was to serve God and save our soul—not to enjoy ourselves or make a lot of money, but to keep out of sin, and serve God, and get to heaven—very plain doctrine, indeed, Miss Aubrey, and spoken in a strong Irish brogue, very different from your friend Mr. Edward's genteel voice, that sounds for all the world like a flute-stop of an organ; and I'm half afraid to tell you that Father Daly was a short, thick-set man, with a face for all the world like a potato. But that is what he told us, and, my word, but it went home to the fellows' hearts; and as to my father, he laid his head on his arm, and sobbed like a baby.

"After mass was over he went to him; I don't know how it all came about, but Father Daly stayed two days longer, and they had some longish talks together; and a week or two later my father went down to Brisbane, and when he came back he told us he was a Catholic.

"We soon saw the change, though it did not come all at once. As brave and true, and just as ever, but the pride was gone—and after a bit he got a priest, a Spanish Benedictine, to come and settle at Glenleven, as our place was called. He took charge of my education, and rode about looking up the settlers, and every morning when he was with us, I served his mass. Well, I've seen some of your fine churches, and they get up all that sort of thing now in tremendous style, but St. Peter's itself would never be to me what that little wooden barn was, which we called our chapel. The mass, the daily mass in the wilderness there, with a dozen or so of rough shepherds and cattle drivers only, kneeling there in the early morning, all so still, so humble—I tell you it was the cave of Bethlehem!

"Father Jerome did a great work among the settlers. Gradually they got to love him and trust him, and he did what he liked among them; and my father too had a grip on them all; with all their free, unshackled ways they felt his power, and it ruled them. Many of them till then had lived like dogs, and he and Father Jerome just made men of them. It can be done, sir," said Grant, looking fixedly at me, "and there is only one way of doing it. It was not law that made the change at Glenleven, but two men with loving hearts, who lived in the fear of God, and spent themselves for their brethren.

"When I was nineteen, my dear mother died, and my father was obliged to revisit Europe. There was some bother about the Irish estates—well, it don't matter; he came back to Europe and brought me with him; he did not stay in England, so we just passed through, and crossed by Holyhead, and the three months, which were all we stayed, were mostly spent in the county Mayo. Before we sailed again, we came up to Dublin, and a thing happened to me there which I shall carry in memory to my grave.

"There was a lad about my own age, young Harry Gibson, whom my father had agreed to take out with him, and let him learn sheep-farming. It was a Sunday afternoon, and we two were coming home after a longish walk, when we passed a little chapel, the door was open. 'Come in here,' said Harry, 'and may be you'll see the strangest sight in Dublin.' We entered—an ugly little place enough, with an aisle divided off the whole length of the Church by iron bars, behind which some old women were kneeling. They were not nuns, but, as I afterwards heard, single ladies who lived here by way of a home, in St. Joseph's Retreat as it was called.

"We knelt down and said our prayers, and I was wondering what Harry had brought me there to see, when there came in from the little sacristy a figure such as I had never seen before—such as in this world I shall never see again. How shall I describe him? An old man, stooping and bent, in extreme old age, in his black priest's cassock, so worn it was thread-bare; but his face, his eyes—all that was human had gone out of them—the flesh, the body, and the pride of life all gone, destroyed, obliterated. Nothing left but the stamp of an unutterable meekness. He walked feebly up to the altar and knelt there, such a worship in the bend of his head; and after a little he rose and returned to the sacristy, and, as he passed

us, those meek eyes fell on me and penetrated me to the soul.

"I was still full of the thought of it all, when the sacristy door opened again, and a little serving boy came up to me, and whispered that 'the Father wanted to speak to me.' I went in wonder, and there he sat in an unbroken arm-chair, with a little kneeling-place beside him, to which he motioned me. I could not have resisted him if it had been to save my life, so I knelt and waited till he should speak."

"My child," he said, "do you want to save your soul?"

"I do indeed, Father."

"Well then, you'll mind my words, will you?" I bowed my head, for my heart was beating so I could not speak.

"You must promise me three things: that you'll never miss hearing Mass on Sundays, if you're within twelve miles of it; that you'll never drink a drop of spirits—and here now, that you'll guard your eyes," and, as he said it, he put his hand over my eyes, so, and as I felt the touch of those thin, wasted fingers, I knew it was the touch of a saint. "Do you promise, my boy?"

"I do indeed," I said; "I promise you all three things."

"Well then, if you do," he said, "I'll promise *you* something—and he spoke slow and distinct,—*I promise you, you'll save your soul.* And one thing more I have to say to you, and don't forget my words: *If riches increase, set not your heart on them;* and mind this word, too: *We must lay down our lives for the brethren.*" He laid his hand on my head and blessed me, and somehow or other I got back to my place. Harry took my arm, and we left the chapel.

"Who is he?" was all I could say.

"A saint," was his reply, "if there ever was one on this earth; that was *Father Henry Young.*"

"I had never before heard of that extraordinary man, but Harry told me many marvellous things about him; how at eighty years of age he lived on bread and vegetables, never slept on a softer bed than a bare board, and how, penniless as he was, as to private means, thousands passed through his hands; the alms entrusted to him, and administered with inconceivable labor. The look and the words of such a man were not easily forgotten; and so you see," continued Grant, laughing, "you see how it is that I became a water-drinker, and why, come what will, I must go to Bradford to-morrow."

"And I see how it is," thought I to myself, "that Grant's eyes are not precisely like the eyes of other men." But I said nothing.

"Is that all?" said Mary.

"Very nearly," replied Grant. "We went back to Australia, and began the sheep-farming again. As I grew older, I often went down to Brisbane and Sydney to do business for my father, and many's the time I thanked Father Young for his three warnings. My father, meanwhile, was growing a prosperous man, and people said he was saving money. But then came the gold fever, and drew all our hands away; his health too began to break; and four years after our return from Ireland it was all over. A day or two before the end something seemed to trouble him. 'Willie,' he said, 'I don't care to live for anything else, but I wish the debts had been paid.' Now, you must know that, when he first left England, there had been debts, not his own, but his father's; a good deal had been paid, and for what remained they made a composition with their creditors. But the dream of my father's life had been to pay them all back in full, and not till he had done that, he used to say, could he feel himself a free man."

"How much is there at Sydney?" I asked.

"£70,000."

"I started. I had no notion he had laid by so much. 'And the debts?'"

"Well, they're over £60,000; if you paid them out of that, there wouldn't be much left for you, my boy."

"But, then, the land?"

"Worth nothing now, with every fellow that can do a day's work off to the diggings."

"Well, it don't matter, father," I said, "the debts shall be

paid; so set your mind at ease about that. It shall never be said that you left the money, and it didn't do the thing you wished."

"I think I still see the smile on his face, as he squeezed my hand and whispered, 'Thank you.'"

"So I left Harry to do what he could at Glenleven, and as soon as I could put things straight, and get the money together, I brought it to England. The debts are all paid off, thank God, and they leave me about £4,000 to start with. You see," he added, laughing, "I am not in a way to stand much in need of Father Young's last warning."

"Really, Mr. Grant, it's a most beautiful story," said my mother, "and quite a lesson."

Grant looked at her with his kind, sweet smile, then rose and bade us all good night. My father went to show him his room, and I was following, when Mary held me fast, and whispered, "Don't go; I want to say something."

"My dear Mary, I'm so awfully sleepy."

"I don't care; one turn under the verandah."

"What a tyrant you are! Well, here goes; now what is it?"

"Jack," she said, half choking with emotion, "you see who he is, don't you?"

"See? Who? Grant?"

"Yes, Grant—if you like to call him so; I should call him the Duke of Leven."

"Duke of fiddlesticks! Why, what are you dreaming of, Mary? The old Duke died at Baden, and his son at Carstairs in India."

"Did you ever hear of his death?" she asked.

"No, I don't know that I did; but this isn't he; why he would be old enough to be Grant's father."

"And was his father," she said. "Oh, Jack, that you shouldn't see it, and you a lawyer! His father at Oxford, and the debts, and then the estates in Ireland, and the name they gave their land in Australia, Glenleven. Oh, Jack, don't you see it?"

I did see it sure enough, though it was mortifying that she had guessed it before me.

"Mary," I said, "you're a Solomon. Put you on a judge's wig, and in your summing up you'd beat the Chief Justice! But what shall we do? Must we tell my father?"

The question was debated, but, as Mary said, we might be wrong; and even if we were right, it did not seem the thing to force Grant's secret. If he did not want to be known as the Duke of Leven, it was not for us to unveil him. At any rate we resolved to say nothing at present, but to wait for what might follow.

CHAPTER V.

AN EVENTFUL DAY.

AT breakfast next morning came the letters, one for Grant, sent on from London to the White Lion, and from the Lion to the Grange, with the Australian postmark. Grant opened it, read it with a flush on his cheek, then crushed it in his hand, and read it again, and, finally, finished his breakfast in abstracted silence. As soon as it was over, he started for Bradford; and we, more at our leisure, made our way to morning service, where, I fear, the well-turned sentences of the Vicar's sermon fell on very inattentive ears, so far as I was concerned, for my thoughts were full of Grant and his story. Yes, he was right, that which he described was truly power; he had a something which we had not; it was the straight aim, the righteous purpose, the strength of a soul that knew the worth of souls, and to whom all else was nothing.

We walked home through the park. "I am sorry for Grant," said my father; "£4,000 is little enough with which to begin life afresh. He'll have to go back to Australia."

"Why so, papa?" said Mary.

"Why, my dear, what can a man do in England with £4,000?"

"It strikes me," I said, "that wherever Grant is, or whatever he has, he'll be *doing* something. Take it altogether,

he's the most remarkable specimen I've ever set eyes on."

By this time we were approaching home, and could see some one standing at the garden gate, as it seemed on the watch for us. It was Mr. Jones, the head gardener; and, as he advanced to meet us, I noticed he held a paper in his hand, and that his manner indicated something was the matter.

"Have you seen this, sir?" he said, addressing my father; "I fear it's too true. It must have happened on Friday."

"Seen what? What has happened?"

My father seized the paper which Jones held out; I read it with him looking over his shoulder:

"Fatal Yacht Accident—Five Lives Lost."

"We regret to have to chronicle a very melancholy accident which took place yesterday off the coast of Ryde. The yacht, 'Water Lily,' belonging to Viscount Belmont, eldest son of the Earl of Bradford, came in collision with a steamer near the Start Point, and instantly filled and sank. Every exertion was made by those on board the steamer to render assistance to the crew of the 'Water Lily;' the master and two men were saved, but Lord Belmont and his brother, the Hon. E. Carstairs, together with the three remaining hands, were drowned, and all efforts to recover the bodies have as yet proved unavailing. We understand the deceased gentlemen were the only surviving sons of their noble father," &c., &c.

I saw and read no more. My father stood silent, stunned, motionless. At last the words came to his lips: "Both drowned? Impossible!—and their father!—"

We went into the house. Of the earl, Jones could tell us nothing. He was in Scotland, he believed, and it would take time for the news to reach him. But news travels fast in these our days, and we were not long left in doubt how it fared with the bereaved father. There was a ring at the bell, and a buff-colored envelope was brought in by the servant. A post-office telegram from Belmont, the Scotch residence: "From E. Scott, House Steward, to Mr. John Aubrey, Oakham. 10 A. M. Bad news from Ryde; yacht accident. Lord B—— heard it suddenly. An apoplectic fit; still insensible."

And then, in an hour, a second telegram:—

"Still insensible. Mr. Wigram and Lady Mary sent for. Doctors give no hope."

Lady Mary was his only daughter, married to a Scotch M. P., and residing near Belmont. We saw that the curtain was closing heavily on the Oakham family. We sat and waited; what else could we do? And when Grant returned from Bradford he found us thus, waiting for the final telegram.

It came at last, ere nightfall, and told us that all was over. In less than eight-and-forty hours, the earl and his two sons had been swept from life, and the younger, as well as the elder line of the Oakham family, as my father said, was now extinct.

I watched Grant's countenance as he said it, but it betrayed nothing. "I think, Mr. Aubrey," he said, "that I had better be going. You will be having plenty of business here of one sort or another, and the family coming, and I shall be an intrusion. I shall start for London by the express train to-morrow."

"So best," said my father, who was crushed with the events of that terrible Sunday; "but we shall see you here again, Mr. Grant? We all feel as though we had known you from boyhood."

Grant smiled. "Thank you, it is very pleasant, but I too have had my surprises to-day; and I find I am wanted back at Glenleven without delay. I shall probably be leaving England within a fortnight."

I felt inexpressibly sorry. But it could not be helped. So next day, after breakfast, I took his arm and led him for a last turn in the park. My father had gone up to the mansion to prepare, alas! for receiving the bodies, and give orders for the great pageant of the funeral; and Grant and I sauntered through the flower gardens that flaunted in the sunshine, and passed those very hot-houses and pineries on which we had been cutting our jokes the day before, all now an empty, miserable mockery.

"And Bradford!" ejaculated Grant, at last. "My word! what a place! to think of men drawing out their thousands from such a den to spend it on that hideous rubbish, and leave the souls of men to sink below brutality."

I laid my hand on his arm: "Have a care, Grant," I said, "they are beyond our judgment."

"True," he said, and he lifted his hat; "but tell me what you think; must wealth always bring such blindness with it?"

"How? I don't understand."

"Well, you remember the Gospel?"—(I fear I did not)—"How hardly shall they that have riches enter heaven." As though they could not. Can it, must it always be so?"

"My dear Grant," I said, "these questions are beyond me; anyhow, neither you nor I are just now in the way to test the facts."

Grant groaned, and handed me the Australian letter he had received the day before. "Read that," he said, "and you will see what I am thinking of." It was from his friend Harry Gibson:—

"DEAR GRANT,

"You'll think me dead and buried, but I'm just worked off my legs, and haven't had time to eat, much less to write. I've stunning news for you. You remember Bill, the native boy whom you saved from drowning? Well, he came in the other day, and told me he had something he would show to no one but me or the master. What was it? I must come and see. So I went, to humor him, and he took me to the glen. A huge boulder, as it seemed to be, concealed by some scrubby bushes, but with a yellow glitter, and what looked like quartz—in short, a monstrous nugget!—We had it out, and got it down safe to Ballarat, 2,168 ounces, value £3,376! It has made a precious noise, I can assure you. Old Lyndsay, the Government surveyor, has been here, and examined the land, and the end of it is that Glenleven is pronounced 'auriferous' from one end to the other. Now, what will you do?—sell, let, or dig? Either way I suppose the property must be about the best thing in the market. Lyndsay says what it contains must be reckoned by millions. Write your orders, or better still, come back and give them; or six months hence I won't answer for being an honest man in spite of Father Young and his warning.—Faithfully yours,

"H. GIBSON."

"You see how it is," said Grant, as I returned the letter, hardly knowing whether to congratulate or condole with him. "Millions: and I have before me here a picture of what men do with millions, and at Bradford of what they do *not* do, and in my heart, Jack, a terrible sense of what they might and ought to do; and I ask myself shall I do it? Will gold be a curse to me, as to them? Will its touch poison, betray, deceive me? Shall I come to think money well spent on yachts and betting-books, and the best table in all London, and leave thousands of souls in my gold-diggings going to perdition. Must that be so, I say? and if not, how prevent it?"

"Grant," I said, "you overstrain your notions, you do indeed. Money is a means: a means of good as well as of evil."

"Just so," he said; "but how many men use it for good? And how dare I prophesy to myself that I shall do better than the multitude?"

We walked home silently. There he took his leave of us all, and said a word of the happiness he had felt in our little home-circle; it had been but three days since I had met him in the train, and we were parting like brothers. I accompanied him to the station, and when the carriage door was closed, and at last the train moved on, I felt it like a bereavement.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FUNERAL.

THE funerals were over. Mr. Wigram, and Lady Mary, and some other family connections had assembled at Oakham; everything had been done with becoming solemnity, for, indeed it was a solemn thing to lay them side by side, the father and his two sons—the last of the Earls of Bradford. Then came the opening of the will, Lord Duffield, a maternal uncle, and Sir John Ripley being the two executors. There were so many thousands to Lady Mary, and legacies and bequests, and plenty of money to pay them. But as to Oakham and its plate, and furniture, and library, and the Bradford mines, and the Scotch estates, they were all entailed, first on his eldest, next to his second son; and failing both of these, and their children (and

they had none), all the demesnes of the late earl passed to the next male heir, and who *that* was would be a case for the lawyers. Mr. Wigram, of course, was disappointed; but the will was clear, and the executors knew their business.

"The next male heir!" exclaimed Mr. Edwards. "It will take a lifetime to trace out the pedigree!"

"Not quite so long as you think," said Sir John; "I believe it is not so very long since the heir of Oakham has been within these very walls."

"Not Grant! exclaimed my father; "no, not possible!"

"Ay, not only possible, but most certain," said Sir John; "William Grant Carstairs, only son of Lord Carstairs, and grandson of the old Duke of Leven. His father never took the ducal title, and even dropped that of Carstairs when he settled in Australia; but I have undisputable proof that Mr. Grant, of Glenleven, was really the man; indeed it was well known in the colony, when I was governor. Carstairs died about a year ago, and his son, this William Grant Carstairs, is really Duke of Leven. He came to England to pay off the last remnants of his grandfather's debts, and as he could not do this without putting himself in communication with the Commission of Creditors, of which I am chairman, I became acquainted with his real name and history."

"Then Mary was right," I muttered to myself, while Sir John continued:

"We shall place the necessary evidence of these facts before the right tribunals, and, meanwhile, Mr. Grant must be communicated with."

"He leaves England in a fortnight," said my father.

"He will do no such thing," said Sir John. "It will be a case for the lords, and he will, no doubt, have a subpoena to appear and give evidence."

It all happened as he said; there was no difficulty about the proofs of identity, for there had never been any concealment of the fact, and every one in Queensland knew well enough who "Grant of Glenleven" really was, and why he chose to drop the family name and ducal title. Then as to the heirship, that was equally plain. There were but the two male branches of the family, of both of which Grant was now the sole surviving representative. When all this had been sifted and proved, and every legal form gone through which could be demanded by the House of Peers or Doctor's Commons, then, and not till then, did Grant consent to appear at Oakham, and receive from the executors of the late earl all that was necessary to constitute him its master. It took more than a year to constitute all this, and when at last the day was fixed for the new duke to take possession, not Oakham only, but the entire county prepared to give him a worthy reception. I had my share of the law business, and went down to assist my father in the heavy work which the occasion brought on him. I shall not easily forget it. All the gentlemen of the county had assembled there, lords and baronets; but I need not give a list. There were triumphal arches and processions of school children, and the Exborough Volunteers, and a dozen carriages to meet him at the station. I remembered how at that same station he had stood alone a year before, looking in vain for some one to carry his bag to the White Lion; I remembered that, as I saw him now step on to the platform, and shake hands with the Marquis of Exborough, and when I heard the loud cheers that greeted him. How the bells rang out as the array of carriages drove through the village! What a bright gala day it was! The old family restored to Oakham, the old property given back to the eighth Duke of Leven.

But I don't intend to dwell on all this further. When the fuss of the grand reception was over, he sent for me to come to him. "Aubrey," he said, "what is to be done about the Australian business? Harry keeps on pressing for some one to go out. Can you find me anywhere an honest man with a clear head, and I'll engage he shall make his fortune."

I thought, and I hesitated.

"Will you go yourself?" he said, at last. "Mind, I don't ask you to go; but if you decide on accepting the post, I believe you will not regret it."

I consulted my father, and he urged me to accept the offer. There did not seem much chance of making my fortune by English law, and so, to make a long story short, before Christmas I left England, whither, as things turned out, I did not return for ten long years that were full of changes.

I have no intention, dear reader, of troubling you with my personal history during that eventful period. It was a busy part of my life, and the duke was right in saying that I should not regret it. My concern just now is to tell you my friend's story, and not my own; and my ten years in Queensland were certainly not without their utility in advancing his interests. I won't bind myself to say to a shilling the sum which I sent over to England as the produce of his gold fields at Glenleven, but Harry Gibson had not been far wrong in calculating their value at millions. If any one will bear in mind the fact (which is a fact) that in those ten years the produce of gold in this one colony exceeded £104,000,000, they will easily understand what must have been the value of a single property which extended over some thousands of acres; for when Lord Carstairs first settled in the colony, an enormous tract of sheep-feeding land could be bought for a comparative trifle.

My own interests, of course, were not forgotten; the duke's terms were more than liberal; and, when the whole estate had been finally disposed of, I was able to return to England a wealthy man. One commission, entrusted to me by the duke, spoke well for his heart; it was the removal to England of his parents' remains, which had been laid to rest in the little cemetery of Ballarat.

Yet I own there were some things in my home correspondence which gave me a secret anxiety. Much was said in praise of the new duke, of his generosity, his manly principles, his care for his property and his tenants; but expressions were now and then dropped which showed me he had the character of being eccentric. I was sorry for this, though not much surprised; in my brief intercourse with him in former years it was impossible to deny that his originality looked in that direction. What did surprise me much more was that, judging by his own letters, far from despising money, he seemed to care for it a good deal. He took his millions from Australia with a very good grace, and made no objection to the proposals I submitted, whereby a larger revenue could be raised from the property. And after all, I sometimes said to myself, this is but natural. Men theorize on gold and like to call it dirt, so long as their hands are clear of it; but let them feel its magic touch and the dirt becomes marvelously pleasant. Leven desires to get as much as he justly can from his property, and so do I, and so does everybody. And yet the sigh with which I closed my meditations showed me that my imagination had painted the "Grant" of former days as something higher and more unselfish in his aims than "everybody."

There was another thing that struck me as odd. A year or two after I came to Glenleven I became a Catholic. I had never thought much of these subjects in early youth; but many things which Grant had said had gone home; and the impressions first received from him were deepened in Australia. There, for the first time, I saw the Catholic religion at full work; I felt its mastery of souls, its reality as a Divine power, and to that power I submitted. It was only natural for me to imagine that the Catholic Duke of Leven would have been leader of his co-religionists in England. I had the English papers, Catholic and Protestant, sent out to me pretty regularly, and after my conversion I looked with some eagerness to see what part he took in parliamentary debates on questions affecting Catholic interests, education questions, workhouse questions, church-building questions, and the rest. I looked for his name, and I generally looked in vain. In my perhaps romantic imaginings about his probable course I had pictured him as the founder of benevolent institutions through the length and breadth of the kingdom; I thought he would acquire a distinguished name and achieve great things for the poor and the laboring classes; but if he did so, the papers, at any rate, had nothing to tell me about it. There is no denying, it was a disappointment, but I gradually grew used to regard the whole subject as one in

which the fancy of youth had cheated me with its wonted delusions; and who is there who reaches middle life who has not to look back at one thing or other as having been the slave of his imagination?

I returned, then, to England, spending a week or two in London before going down to Oakham, where my parents still lived; for though my father's age had obliged him to give up his post as steward into younger hands, the duke would not hear of his leaving the Grange. Mary had become the wife of Charles Oswald, a small squire of the neighbourhood, and was still able to be a good deal of comfort to her father and mother, and to find an ample sphere for all her capacities of usefulness. In returning to Oakham, therefore, I was still returning home, though I had formed no plans as to my own final settlement.

In London, I found plenty of old friends to welcome me, not, perhaps, the less kindly from the fact that rumor had credited me with having brought home an Australian fortune. Some of those whom I had left just entering on their profession, had fought their way to legal eminence, and some had earned their silken gowns and a certain share of reputation.

Sir Clinton Edwards, the brother of our Oakham vicar, was now a judge, and at his table I met a group of men more or less distinguished in the world of politics and of letters. The world has many phases, some more, and some less pleasant to come in contact with. A London dinner-room, filled with refined and intelligent people, who know everything and everybody worth knowing, is, no doubt, a very agreeable sample of polite society; but mark well this truth, dear reader, it is still the world, and anything higher and better than what savors of the world, you must not look to extract from its conversation. Sir Clinton had a fancy for well-mixed variety in his company, so on the present occasion I had the good fortune to meet a Solicitor-General, and a Home Secretary; the editor of a popular philosophic review (whose theology, by the way, was not predominantly Christian), two men of science, and a county member. Including our host and myself, we numbered eight. It is needless to say that our dinner was irreproachable. For the passing moment I found myself a lion; for the gayest and wittiest circles so soon exhaust the sources of their gaiety, that any person who, for one half hour, can stimulate a new curiosity, may calculate for exactly that space of time on enjoying a fair amount of popularity.

The conversation in such a circle was as graceful and varied as the forms in a kaleidoscope. Home politics, the state of the colonies, Hapirook's last pamphlet on the Council of Ephesus, the Vicar of Oakham's long promised, and recently published, work on Roman Antiquities, the last cartoon in *Punch*, and the University boat race, all passed in review, till for my sins I fell into the hands of the philosophic editor, who was, of course, profoundly ignorant of the creed of his next door neighbor. He was engaged on an article which aimed, I will not say at proving men to be well-developed monkeys, for I have never found that writers of this particular class ever aim at proving anything whatsoever, but at throwing out pleasant theories of the possible probability of their being nothing better. The intellectual inferiority of the Australian aborigines was the point on which I was subjected to cross-examination, and every fact elicited was bagged by my tormentor for future editorial purposes. But the county member who sat opposite charitably stepped in to my relief.

"I tell you what, Ford," he said, when he could get in a word, "you needn't go to Australia to look for intellectual inferiority; no, nor for savages either, nor for that matter for heathens; you'll find the whole stock-in-trade ready for inspection in a good many of our manufacturing towns, only nobody comes to inspect them."

"Very true," said Sir Clinton; "when I am Lord Chancellor, I shall introduce a bill for obliging all members of Parliament to spend one calendar month in a colliery district, say Bradford, for instance."

The familiar name struck on my ear and raised a host of recollections.

"Ah," said one of the men of science, "I've been down there

lately. You know the improvement of the mines is one of the duke's hobbies."

"And not merely *mines*, is it?" said the secretary; "I've heard a good deal of his work among the people."

"Just so," replied the scientific gentleman, "he's always at something; you know it would puzzle the calculating boy to number his hobbies; but the last thing has been the mines, and really his ideas about ventilation are very creditable."

"You are speaking, I presume, of the Duke of Leven?" I inquired.

"Ah, yes, you would have known him, of course, before going to Australia. Curious history his has been, certainly."

"He is really an excellent fellow," said Sir Clinton, "but not long for this world, I fear; I never saw a man so altered."

"Well, he is a very good fellow, of course," said the county member; "but he carries things too far, to my mind."

"How so?" I ventured to ask.

"Oh, I don't know exactly; lives the life of a hermit, which, in his position, is a mistake, and does mischief; and then he's always sporting some social view or other; setting himself a little against the current. One thing, you know, he's a Catholic."

"Yes," observed the second man of science, who till now had spoken but little, "it's a great pity that. Cuts a man of his standing so completely out of everything. He can't take his proper place in general society, parliament or anywhere."

"Well," began the editor, "of all the idiotic absurdities a man can be guilty of, I should say that was the primeest. I declare it would justify a commission of lunacy."

"I'm afraid that's the real explanation of the whole thing," said the county member, looking sagacious, and touching his forehead; "there certainly is a touch in the top story."

"Touch or no touch," said Sir Clinton, "he has done wonders at Bradford. I know it by the results at the sessions."

"And may I ask what he has done?" said the editor, with the slightest possible tone of sarcasm.

"Changed the whole system of wages, shut up about twenty public-houses, and, really, I don't know how he has managed it, but they're not so brutalized by half since he's had the manor."

"And if I am rightly informed (you'll correct me, of course, if I am in error), but I understood he had brought over a lot of German monks and built them a monastery."

"Ah, yes," said Sir Clinton, "that's at Glenleven, on the moors, you know." Well, it's one of his crochets, and, perhaps, not the most sensible."

The secretary shook his head, and looked disgusted. "I know this, we shall have to put a stop to all that sort of thing some day," he said, "and the sooner the better, in my opinion."

Then the conversation, by an easy change, flowed into foreign politics, and I was left to digest all I had heard, and form my own conclusions. Was Leven really a little touched? Was he unpopular? Or was he dying? Had his ten years of boundless means produced as their whole result an improved system of wages and mine ventilation, and the building of a monastery? And did he fritter away his genius and his undoubted powers in a quick succession of profitless hobbies?

I should go down next day to Oakham and judge for myself.

CHAPTER VII.

RETURNING HOME.

My first week at Oakham was given to my family. I had to be introduced to my new brother-in-law, Oswald, who had brought Mary over from Exdale manor, that we might all be once more together. The duke had been called away to Scotland, and, to tell the truth, I was not sorry to have time and opportunity for rectifying my ideas on the new order of things before meeting him. My father praised him highly, for was he not a Leven? That single fact sufficed for him; nor would I have disturbed the simplicity of his loyalty to the representative of the old family by so much as a question. My

mother had a special kindness for him, only regretting that he had never married. Mr. Edwards, as courteous and harmonious as ever, fully seconded her regrets, and suggested that the influence of a refined and affectionate wife might have softened something of that austerity of character which he humbly conceived was out of tune with the century. His curate, the Rev. Wilfrid Knowles, who happened to be present, said nothing, but I thought he *looked* a good deal, and on inquiry, I found that the curate held more advanced views than the vicar, and was supposed to have what Mrs. Edwards termed "monastic tendencies."

All this explained but little. Oswald informed me the general impression in the county was that his politics were revolutionary; but the solitary fact in support of this theory appeared to be that his first act on coming to Oakham had been to lower his farmers' rents on condition that they raised the rate of their laborer's wages. Mary said it was all malice, and that they did not understand him. She evidently was his warm friend, and her husband declared that she did what she liked with him.

On the third day after my arrival, I strolled up to the park in company with Oswald, and could not help observing with a little surprise that the pineries and forcing-houses kept their ground, and had even apparently received some additions. I inquired for my old friend Jones, but found he had departed, and that his place was filled by one of a younger generation.

"I half expected he would have made a clean sweep of all this," I said; "he used to inveigh against it all as though grapes in June had been one of the deadly sins."

"Ah!" said Oswald, "that was Mary's doing. She suggested to him that if he did not choose to grow grapes and apricots for his own table, he would be doing a good work to grow them for other people, and that they would be like gifts from paradise if he sent them to the hospitals. So now every week they are packed up and sent to the Exborough Infirmary, and the County Hospital, and half a dozen other institutions, not to speak of his own affair that he has founded at Bradford."

"Really that was a bright thought of old Mary's," I said; "who would ever have thought of her taking the command in that style?"

"Yes, and she gets her own perquisites, I believe," said Oswald, "with which she makes happy all the sick people of the neighborhood."

"How about the orchids?" I asked, rather maliciously.

"Oh, as to them, you had better ask Verney." And so saying, he led the way to a small enclosure where a young and intelligent-looking man was superintending the packing of various cases of fruit and flowers. I looked at the rich fruit, no longer grown for show or luxury, and felt pleased to think of its altered destination. "And the flowers?" I asked, amazed at the quantity which were being delicately packed in cool moss, about to be carried off to the station.

"To Bradford, sir, and Homchester," replied Verney, the head gardener "and one or two other missions. Thursday will be Corpus Christi, and they use a wonderful quantity of flowers."

"Hem!" I thought; "I see all about it; what used to go to the dinner-table and the ball-room he sends to the hospital and the altar. Well, that is like old Grant;" and it gave me a glow of pleasure.

I soon found that Verney was a Catholic, as were several of the men now employed about the place, and I heard from him that a private chapel had been added to the house, which sufficed for the wants of the few Oakham Catholics. But a magnificent church had replaced the old and miserable erection at Bradford; and there was a convent with nuns who worked the schools and served the hospital; and, besides that, half the town had been rebuilt, and the wretched dens which formerly abounded were replaced by model lodging-houses.

"The duke himself has a house at Bradford," said Oswald, "and spends a good deal of time there; how he can endure it, I don't know, but he sees to all manner of things himself, for at heart, you know, he likes business."

"I suspect also, Oswald," said I, "that he has a liking for souls."

"Well, I should have thought Bradford about the last place to have supplied him with that commodity," said Oswald; "very queer style of souls he must find among the colliers, and not the most responsive, for just now they seem greatly disposed to stone him by way of expressing their gratitude."

"How so? Is he not popular?"

"Not with all. You see, he attempts to limit their means of making beasts of themselves, and many resent it like true-born Britons. They've got a fellow named Degg to lead them now, who possesses a tongue, and a quite remarkable gift of slander, of which he gives the duke a weekly benefit in a rascally penny paper, which he edits, and which he sells by thousands. It's a grand thing is our education movement; it enables each man now-a-days to read his Degg."

"Would you like to see the chapel, sir?" said Verney.

"Immensely," I replied. And leaving his flowers in charge of one of the men in attendance, he led the way towards the building. It had an approach through the shrubberies as well as from the house, for the convenience of the congregation; and Verney, having found means of informing the chaplain of my presence, left me in the hands of that gentleman, and returns to his green-houses.

The Oakham chapel was small in size, and my first impression of it was rather devotional than magnificent. Except in the east window there was no painted glass; but through the open casements came the sound of waving branches, and the green and pleasant light which falls through summer foliage.

After a few minutes, I began to take in some of the details. Though the chapel was Gothic in style, the architect had contrived to find places for several pictures, some of which struck my eyes as familiar. I remarked it to the chaplain. "Probably," he replied, "you may remember them formerly in the Bradford collection; the Crucifixion which you see there used to hang in the great dining-room. It had been a Spanish altarpiece, I think, and the duke said it was a sacrilege to put such a painting over a gentleman's sideboard."

"And at the same time that he removed it," whispered Oswald, "he burned half a dozen Venuses and Adonises, which had been the glory of old Bradford's gallery: a fact, I assure you; and at Christie's they would have brought their thousands."

The paintings had, in fact, been taken from various parts of the ducal mansion; all, with one exception, a singular picture, painted, as the chaplain told me, by a young German artist, under the duke's personal direction. It was a single figure, representing a young man in poor and squalid attire, lying on a bed of straw, and clasping a crucifix. The background was dark, and there were few or no pictorial adjuncts; only in one corner of the picture appeared something like a ladder or flight of steps above the head of the principal figure. All the beauty of the painting was in that head; wasted, sweet, superhuman in its expression, carrying me back to the description which Grant had once given of old Father Henry Young's countenance, in which the pride of flesh and blood had all been destroyed and obliterated.

"What a singular picture," said Oswald. "Who is it? a saint?"

"It is St. Alexis," replied the chaplain, and Oswald evidently was not greatly the wiser. But I looked, and thought, and looked again, and I fancied I had understood its meaning. The noble youth who fled the world, who despised pleasure, and held riches as a curse, the prince who chose in his own father's house, to live unknown, and to die as a beggar, was, doubtless, one whose story might have a deep attraction for a man made rich against his will, and ever fighting with wealth and its temptations.

We approached the altar, and I perceived what had not struck me at first, the exceeding richness of all its fittings.

"That tabernacle," said the chaplain, "is *solid gold*: it was made out of the first gold discovered at Glenleven, in Australia, 'the great nugget,' as it was called; the duke had it sent to

England untouched, and resolved that the first fruits of his gold-fields should furnish the tabernacle of his chapel. The lamps and candlesticks are likewise Australian gold, and so are the sacred vessels."

I knelt before the tabernacle, and the last fragment of my doubts and misgivings vanished into thin air. "Oh, Grant, Grant!" I murmured, "what injustice I have done you! The world talks and judges, and comprehends nothing; you are not of its form and fashion!" And as we turned to leave the chapel, I seemed still to see before me the dying face of St. Alexis, and the golden tabernacle.

We walked home through the plantations, and Oswald was silent, and, for him, thoughtful.

"I called your duke a man of business this morning," he said, "but just now I could fancy him to be a poet."

"A poet! Why so?"

"Well, it was a beautiful thought that about his gold; there was something about the whole thing that struck me as poetical."

"I doubt if the duke was ever conscious of doing anything particularly graceful; but, undoubtedly, *Faith* always has an innate sense of beauty."

"That is a little beyond me," said Oswald; "but I will tell you why it struck me. At Exborough Park, as you may be aware, there is also what goes by the name of a chapel. The Exborough people always set you down to gold plate at dinner, but the chapel looks like a dust-hole. Leven has abolished the gold plate at Oakham, and the gentry hereabouts called it one of his peculiarities; but I suspect they would understand it better if they looked at that altar."

"Yet the Exboroughs are Catholics," I remarked.

"I should rather think so," said Oswald, "and immensely proud of being of the old stock, and all that sort of thing. But Lady Ex. goes in for London seasons to any extent, and the Exborough girls are the fastest in the county."

"A report reached me in Australia," I said, "that one of them was likely to become Duchess of Leven."

"Wouldn't Lady Exborough have liked it!" said Oswald; "but it was a dead failure. On that subject, as on many others, Leven is peculiar; and I believe he confided to Mary that if the siege lasted he should have to leave the country."

I laughed. "Then there *was* a siege? And who relieved it?" I asked.

"Oh, I believe Lord Exborough stepped in and stopped proceedings; and Lady Florinda herself took alarm when Glenleven was founded, and the rumour spread that the duke was going to be a lay brother."

"What is Glenleven?" I asked. "Everyone talks of it, and no one tells me what or where it is."

"What, don't you know? It is a large tract of country just on the outskirts of Exborough Moor, where Leven has transplanted a community of Benedictines who fled from the tender mercies of Beastmark. He has built them a grand place, I believe; I have not seen it, but by all accounts the church is a second Cluny. They farm the land, and have all manner of schools of art, carving and metal work; then there are the granite works opened hard by, all which things give occupation to Leven's colony of orphan boys and other select characters, out of whom he cherishes the design of creating a New Utopia."

I looked inquiringly.

"I really cannot tell you much more about it," continued Oswald; "but I think his small success at Bradford, or what he considers as such, has convinced him that reformation of society is somewhat a difficult undertaking unless you take your society in the cradle. And he has conceived the idea of a Christian colony, not beyond the Rocky Mountains, or in the wilds of Australia, but here in the heart of England, to be peopled by men and women of his own bringing up, who shall be protected from penny newspapers, be greatly given to plain chant, and wholly ignorant of the pot-house."

"It sounds splendid; but are you in earnest?"

"Well, I tell you, I have never seen the place. It is a tre-

mendously long drive, and killing for the horses. I gather my ideas of it chiefly from Knowles's talk, who would greatly like to be received as a monk—of course, under certain conditions."

"Well, you have excited my curiosity, and some day I shall try and see for myself," I replied; "but it sounds, as you say, uncommonly Utopian."

We reached home, and for the rest of the evening I listened, after a sort, to Oswald's careless rattle; but my attention, I confess, would often wander away to thoughts of the chapel and Utopia.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE NEW DUKE.

ON the following Monday the Duke returned, and next day I received a brief note from him, begging me to come up to the Park, to dine and sleep, and begin the settlement of the Queensland business the following morning. I went up accordingly, was shown to my room, dressed and descended to the drawing-room, where for the best part of an hour I waited alone, but Leven appeared not. As I afterwards ascertained, the hour preceding dinner was the one hour in the day he claimed for privacy, and no one then ever ventured to disturb him. At last the door opened, and he stood before me. I grasped his hand, and looked into that face, the same, and yet so altered. Aged not by ten but twenty years; no longer with the vigorous, ruddy bloom of five-and-twenty, but pale and transparent, and sweet beyond expression. I stammered out something about "waiting on his Grace," but at once he stopped me. "I have enough of that elsewhere," he said; "let you and me be always Grant and Aubrey."

We went into dinner. Remembering all I had heard of his eremitical habits, I was curious what there might be to notice, and I noticed nothing. There was no gold plate, certainly; but neither was there any affectation of extravagant simplicity.

He talked of old times in Australia, and of Scotland, whence he had just returned, and of Homchester, where he had been inspecting some new engines for his mines. Oswald was right; he certainly had a liking for business.

After dinner we stepped out on the terrace. "How delicious this is, after a week of Homchester; how it reminds me of that happy evening at the Grange, Jack, when you all made me so at home. I couldn't say the feeling it gave me to see your mother with her cap, and her crochet, and her sweet, motherly ways. It reminded me of my own dear mother. Do you know, I often go and have a talk to the old lady, that I may just look at that cap of hers; it's the most lovable thing in Oakham."

(No wonder, I thought, that she considers him faultless.)

"You have been adding to the place since I was here," I said. "Really, Grant, I never expected to see new graperies."

"That was your sister's affair; trust a woman for getting what she has a mind for."

"And, then, the chapel?"

"Ah, yes, I couldn't always be going over to Bradford, as on that eventful Sunday. You've seen it of course?"

"Yes, and St. Alexis."

He smiled. "That was poor Werner's painting; such a fellow, Jack; a true painter; a man with a soul at the end of his paint-brush; it was wonderful."

"So you burnt poor Adonis?"

"Who's been talking about all that nonsense? Mary, I'll be bound. Yes, I burnt him, and I'd burn him again if I had the offer."

"What a Goth you are, Grant"

"About as bad as St. Gregory, for he would certainly have done the same. Look here, Jack; you send a fellow to prison for a month, with hard labor, for selling prints in a shop window that shock the eye of the respectable public; and then the respectable public votes thousands of the public money to hang the walls of the national collections with abominations much more dangerous."

"Well, but what about Werner? is he an ancient or a modern?"

"Werner? Oh, I forgot you didn't know him; well I think I never loved a fellow better; but, you see, my friends have all got a trick of leaving me."

"Is he dead, then," I asked, gently,

"Dead to this world, Jack; he has left it; passed, as the Laureate would say, *'into the silent life.'* He carried his heart and his pencil to Glenleven."

He was silent. "People say——" I began, then paused, for I thought it might seem an impertinence.

"I know what you mean," he said quickly. "Yes, I dreamt about it once, but they would not hear of it. They told me truly that I had received my call, and that my sacrifice must be to remain in the world, and not to leave it."

"Why, of course," I said. "Could you doubt it? It is not every one who has such means at his command."

He sighed deeply. "Means enough, but so little comes of it."

"Come now, Grant, what do you mean by that? Just look at Bradford."

"Bradford!" he said; "yes, indeed, I do look at it—such an utter failure. No, of course, I don't regret it, nor the time, nor the plague of it, nor the money; and I don't mean that there's been nothing done; but, oh, the depths of iniquity hidden away in places like that, and all England seething with them." He bent his head for a minute or two, and an expression of great pain was on his brow when he once more raised it. But it passed in a moment, and again the sweet, calm look returned. "All right, Jack; one must do one's best, and a sad mess the best is; but one must do it, and then leave it with God."

"And how about Glenleven? Is it true, Grant, that you are trying to create a Garden of Eden there, with all due precautions for shutting out the serpent?"

"If you mean the ale-house, yes," he answered. "I suspect that is our English edition of the monster."

"What! beer actually prohibited? My dear Grant, that will never pay; the Anglo-Saxon animal cannot live without it."

"I believe he can't; but I don't go that length."

"What, then?"

"Well, I try it this way: I engage the fellows to drink what they want at home at their own houses."

"But how can they get it to drink?" I asked. "Isn't there something about 'licensed to be drunk on the premises?'"

He looked a little timid, as though aware that he was confessing to a hobby. "I do it this way, Jack: they all have their *rations*. Every man at work on the place has his proper allowance, and it is sent him from the little tavern. But the tavern is in my own hands, and the fellow who keeps it has no license to sell beer or spirits on the premises."

"Don't they evade your code of laws?"

"Well, on the whole, no: but time alone can test it."

We walked up and down for a while in silence. "I know, my dear Aubrey," at last he said, "that there's much to be said against it, as unreal, unpractical. Most men think me an ass, and I daresay they are in the right of it. But to secure even a year, a month, a week of innocence is worth living for—at least that is how I see it."

I felt touched at the humble, apologetic tone of the man who was speaking of what the world styled his crotchet. "My dear Grant," I said, "who can doubt it? All I was thinking was, how far any private efforts can ever take the place of law and public opinion."

"Your old stronghold!" he said, smiling. "You were always the man for law and order. Just see here. Did you ever hear of Count Rumford?"

"The stove-man," I replied; "of course. What of him?"

"Stoves! that's all you know about him. He was Prime Minister to the Elector of Bavaria, and reformed everything. Munich was full of beggars, and no one knew how to get rid of them. Rumford (he was an American, you know,) got a lot of workshops ready. Then, on a fixed day, he agreed with a dozen or so of officers and gentlemen to act with him, and he

himself went into the street, and arrested a beggar. The others did the same, and they took the rogues to the government workshops, and offered them food and wages if they would work, and the pillory if they would not. The next day every beggar in Munich had surrendered, and the streets were free of them."

"I think I have heard that story before," I said; "and I think, also, that the government workshops were abolished by the next Elector, and the beggars returned to their former wicked ways."

"So much the worse for the Elector," said Leven, laughing at my sequel to his story. "Anyhow, Rumford carried his purpose his own way. That is what I like; none of your mendacity acts, and spread of education."

"And yet, Leven, you might advance the good cause a precious deal in parliament?"

"Might I? There are two opinions on that point," he said.

"No, parliament, and committees, and public meetings, and associations are all glorious things no doubt, but they're not my line; they paralyze me. Let those who feel they can do good that way do it, and I give them my blessing; but I can only go one way to work, and that is straight ahead, and arrest my beggar."

"Well, you must take me to your paradise some day," I said.

"That I will; we'll have a week there when all the plaguing business is over. There are red deer on the moors, and others in the river, if you have a taste that way, and it will be very jolly."

Our conversation was interrupted by the sudden appearance the scene of a third party in the shape of a merry fair-haired boy, who came running down the terrace to inform "Cousin Leven" that coffee was waiting; and as we turned to obey the summons, the duke held him by the hand, and let him prattle away of all he had been doing or wanting to do whilst Cousin Leven was in Scotland. At last, as we approached the end of the terrace, the boy set off to announce our coming, and Leven answered my look of inquiry. "Little Edward Wigram," he said; "you know Lady Mary died a Catholic—curious, wasn't it?—and on her death-bed got her husband to promise that this child, at least, her youngest, should be brought up in the faith. He couldn't refuse her; but when I heard it, I wrote and begged him to trust the child to me. You see, Aubrey, I have had the whole thing looked thoroughly into. After me there is no male heir. The entail ceases, and I am at full liberty to leave the property to whom I choose, or run through it during my life, and leave it to nobody. The last is what I ardently desire to do, if I have but time. Still, I suppose, Oakham, at any rate, must go to somebody, and so, the long and short of it is, I have adopted Edward, and he will have whatever is left."

"Does he know it?" I asked.

"Of course he does; how else should I train him to feel his responsibility? And a fine little fellow he is, with the spirit of twenty sea-kings in him. I suppose it will have to be thrashed out of him some day; but it's not bad raw material to begin with."

"Grant," I said bluntly, "do you never intend to marry?" He shook his head. "You see," I continued, "what I mean is this: you can't do half the good you might without that sort of influence at Oakham to help you. And, then, family life—you know its beauty, you feel its charm."

"Yes," he answered rather huskily, "I don't doubt it, I assure you, I don't; but somehow it's not my line."

"Well, but you are sure you are right about it? Look here, what I mean is this: family life is not the world, it can be sanctified. There was an Elzeard and a Delphina as well as an Alexis."

"I know it," he replied, "and a lovely thing it was, that old family life of Christian society; I hardly think I know anything finer. But, bless you Jack, where should I find a Delphina now-a-days? and what on earth should I do with a girl-of-the-period, and, yet more emphatically, what would she do with me?"

"My dear Grant, all young ladies are not of the Exboro' cut."

"Ah, you've been listening to gossip; well, all I can say is this: most Catholic girls are—most that I know, and it's a crying shame on what we call 'the Catholic body.'"

"Then, my dear Grant, it's another abuse which calls for reform, and who is more fit to be a reformer?"

"No, I tell you it's not that alone, but it can't be. Family life not the world, you say? Well now, I'll just tell you this: *it would be the world to me.* As to your dinners and dances, your political careers, and your stars and garters, they neither tempt nor attract me; I can renounce and abjure the pomps and vanities, and feel it a light sacrifice. But if once I felt the home ties of which you speak, 'claiming responsive smiles and raptures high,' they would turn to shackles. Besides, there are other things. I'm a strange fellow, Jack, but I can't help it. I don't think I'm harder about the heart than other men; yourself, Oswald, Werner, and a lot of others, I love you all, and I love you tenderly; but it's quite a different concern, I do assure you." I could only press his hand, and remain silent. "All right, Jack, you must take me as you find me. Edward shall carry out all your plans by-and-by; he'll make a rare Elzear, and your little niece, Mary, will be just the right stuff for a Delphina."

Such was Grant, as I found him after our ten years' separation. As simple, as boyish, as unartificial as ever, but tenderer and gentler, with none of the old asperity of tone and manner. As he said of his father, after his conversion, "the pride had gone out of him." What the process had been I could not guess, but the result was not to be mistaken.

The winding-up of our Queensland business was an affair of time, and until it was finished I remained at Oakham. I gradually came to understand more of my friend's habits of life, and the more I saw the more I wondered. He was literally worn down with the press of work and business. His two secretaries worked with him, and worked hard; but the burden was on his life, and it pressed heavily. The administration of a more than princely revenue, and its administration for the glory of God and the good of his fellow-men, was his daily care and his daily cross. Not at Oakham alone, or at Bradford, or within his own county, and his own immediate circle, did Leven pour out his labor and his substance. The great floods of his charity watered the land through a thousand secret channels. I need not speak of them here; indeed, who could reckon them? for the trouble which others take to be known and done justice to, he spent to remain hidden. But I was witness to the amazing correspondence so faithfully discharged, to the patient investigation, day after day, of fresh applications (not always the most becoming, or the most reasonable), to the unalterable cheerfulness with which he chained himself to his allotted tasks, and made it his single thought "to give his life for his brethren."

At Oakham it was one of his favorite objects to draw the young men of the neighborhood, rich and poor, around him, and make his house a centre. A little whimsical in all his ways he conceived the notion of making the volunteer rifle corps, of which he was colonel, an instrument of social reformation. They had a portion of the park set apart for their exercises and rifle practice, and on certain days he had them to dinner, and on those occasions the dinner was always a great affair. Officers and privates he had them all together. "It is no bad thing the rifle uniform," he said; "it teaches the lads self-respect and courtesy." His house, with its galleries of art and library, his park, and his gardens were open to them on certain days, and during part of the day on Sundays, and among the youths whom he thus drew into his influence he formed a little society. "It cost me a good deal of thought, what we should make our bond of union," he said to me, "but at last I hit on natural history."

"What a fellow you are, Grant," I said; "how on earth does that keep them together?"

"The simplest thing in the world," he replied; "I started an Oakham museum. You remember the statuary hall of the Bradford collection?"

"I do, indeed—a good deal in the Adonis line."

"Exactly; well, I dispersed a great lot of it. What in conscience I could present to the public I did present, and the rest Werner and I doomed to the hammer."

"You sold it?"

"Not exactly, Jack; I should have had a scruple of making money out of all those gods and goddesses; but we got half a dozen paupers out of the Exborough union, with good stout hammers, and in a week the divinities were well broken up, and laid down to form our new approach to the chapel. I assure you, I never take a turn along that road without a thrill of satisfaction."

"Really, Grant, no wonder they call you 'extreme' in your notions."

"Well, but listen: the room, emptied out of all that villany, we turned into our museum. Come and see it." And he led the way to the late hall of statuary.

There were cases of stuffed birds and beasts, specimens of marble and granite from his Glenleven quarries; coal fossils from Bradford, found and contributed by his miners; crystals from the Scottish mountains; and nuggets of gold from Australia. Moreover, here and there were some of the Roman antiquities, dug up in the camp hard by, which had first set in motion the brain of good old Edwards; and there were all manners of curiosities, such as schoolboys prize, and which few but schoolboys are really found to appreciate—wasps' nests, and birds' nests, and dried snakes in bottles.

"No great varieties, you see, but all our own collection; even the boys bring their quota, and that series of bees' and wasps' nests is a real curiosity."

"And you think it answers?"

"I know it does: every hour they give to this sort of thing is an hour stolen from the beer-shop; and, besides, it cultivates and makes them think. I have had a professor or two down here to give some lectures to the society. I choose my professors myself, you know," he said, rather grimly; "and I can assure you they are not Darwins. Well, now, not very many, but a few of those lads have been thinking to good purpose, and form a class of instruction under Father Hubert."

"What does Edwards say to that?"

"Oh, of course, he was rather savage about it at first, and Knowles has opened a course of lectures against Roman aggression; but I suspect they begin to choke him in the utterance."

"Will he ever come to his senses?" I said: "I fancy there is a grain of wheat beneath the chaff in his case."

"Possibly; but it must have time to germinate. You will see him probably at Exdale, where, Oswald tells me, he is expecting you to-morrow. I shall join you there in a couple of days; and then, if all goes well, we'll start for Glenleven."

It was arranged accordingly, and the next day, with little Edward for my companion, I set out for Exdale Manor.

CHAPTER IX.

EXDALE MANOR.

I informed my reader in a previous chapter that my family had no claim whatever to figure in a romance, and that my sister Mary, in particular, had not the least pretension to be considered a heroine. Neither was her husband, Charles Oswald, anything of a hero: but he was an excellent fellow, and their marriage was a happy one. Mary supplied the plain good sense which served as ballast to her husband's animal spirits. Their family consisted of three children, of whom the "little Mary," that Grant had spoken of, was the eldest. Alexia, her young sister, was somewhat of that type which among boys we term a "sad pickle;" and Johnny, the son and heir, was yet in his cradle. The only other figure in the home group was Oswald's unmarried sister, Florence, of whom I could predicate no more on a first introduction than that she had fine, classical features, stamped, however, with that joyless intellectualism which mars all beauty on the face of woman. Mistake me not, dear reader, for an intellectual countenance is a magnificent

object, and the index of a truly magnificent gift; but both the gift and the countenance need something else to soften their sharp edges, and that *something* seemed wanting in Florence Oswald.

Exdale itself was a modest country-house, very different in style and dimensions from Oakham; but it had a charm which Oakham did not possess, it was filled to the brim with a genial, domestic atmosphere. Dear old Mary was regularly in her glory, as mistress of a house, and head of a family. She had the true genius of that particular calling; she understood her husband's ways and wants, and also contrived to supply them; she made the most of a moderate income, and prevented his doing foolish things, without ever dreaming that he was managed; she took in girls from the village school, and trained them to be good servants; but no one was ever plagued with their awkward ways whilst they were in course of training. The house looked as if somebody was always putting it to rights, and yet there was no fuss about it, and Mary herself was never seen in a bustle. She was not a heroine, certainly, but I will maintain against all comers that she was the queen of wives and mothers.

After the deserted suites of state apartments, and long, silent galleries of Oakham, the sound of family talk and children's prattle was a pleasant change, though the scene, by comparison, was a homely one, for what they called "the Park," at Exdale, was little better than a paddock, and instead of elegant fallow deer there were to be seen in it only half a dozen cows and an old pony. The latter was already in possession of Master Edward, his claims being stoutly contested by Alexia, and as passively acknowledged and submitted to by little Mary.

"It's a miniature picture of human life," I observed, as Oswald and I stood at the window and surveyed the group, "Mary representing the old school, and Alexia standing up for the rights of man—or rather of woman."

"In the present instance, Mary will be the winning horse," said Oswald; "I never yet knew a woman who gained the day by a war of independence."

"I don't know about that, Charley," said Florence, who had meanwhile joined us at the window; "I think I have heard of one Judith."

"Under correction," I venture to remark, "Judith won the day less by resistance than by address."

"Just so," said Oswald; "if she had not known the art of making herself agreeable, she would never have brought home the head of Holofernes. And, see, it's just as I said it would be: Edward has vacated his seat in favor of Mary, and Alexia is left to go on foot. Capital lesson for you, Florry."

"A tame sort of conquest," she replied, carelessly; "she lets him lead the pony, as though she did not know how to hold the bridle. Alexia would have been half round the park by this time."

I glanced at the speaker, and it seemed to me as though this little dialogue had given me the key to her character, one that disdained to lean on the strength of another, and would far rather suffer than submit.

We were summoned to dinner, the only other addition to our party being Wilfrid Knowles, who liked to be called "Father Wilfrid," and wore a Roman collar. Between him and Florence there seemed to exist a mutual interest based on conscious antagonism; he, stiff in his sense of sacerdotal superiority, she, equally self-possessed in her audacious spirit of revolt.

"So Degg had done for himself at last," said Oswald, when preliminaries had been gone through, and everybody was feeling comfortable; "it would prolong my life if I thought I should live to see that fellow get his deserts."

"Who is Degg, and what has he done to do for himself?" I inquired.

"I was telling you of him the other day: the editor of the *Western Censor*, and the greatest good-for-naught in Exshire. His Philipines, as he calls them, abusive as they are, have liberated him so cleverly contrived as to escape local censure."

ment; but in his last production entitled '*The Australian Duke*,' he has passed the boundary line, and Leven, at last, has him fairly in his power, for he is bound to prosecute."

"What makes him so exceedingly savage with the duke?" I inquired.

"Oh," said Oswald, "he wanted to be returned member for Bradford at the last election, and Leven was supposed to have used his influence to save the borough from that disgrace."

"Besides, which," added Knowles, "the Duke of Leven is a Christian, and Mr. Degg has an angry aversion to everything that savors of the faith."

"Really," said Florence, "I think you are all rather hard on poor Degg; he writes extravagantly, as men of genius often do, and his sense of wrong and injustice is just like a fiery passion; but he cares for the working classes, and can't always control himself when he pleads their cause."

"Florry, don't talk nonsense," said her brother; "Degg cares for the working-classes just in the same way as I care for the ducks and chickens in my poultry-yard, which I care for extremely, with a view to my ultimate advantage."

"And what particular advantage do you think poor Degg will get from taking part with the weak against the strong?" said Florence.

"In the first place," said Oswald, "he enjoys the sweets of notoriety, and the pleasant sensation of putting down his betters; and if Hapirock should ever again undertake the tinkering of our glorious constitution, I suspect Mr. Degg calculates on floating into parliament on the tide of universal suffrage."

"Well, so be it," said Florence, "worse men than he have before now sat in parliament."

"But, my dear Florence," said Mary, in a tone of remonstrance, "if he really is an infidel?"

"I don't see what right any one has to say so; and, after all, as the word is commonly used, it's a relative term, and means simply people who don't believe exactly as much as we do ourselves. I daresay Mr. Aubrey would consider our best Oxford divines as hopeless infidels."

The blow was intended for Wilfrid, but he remained unscathed by it. "If Mr. Aubrey were to express such an opinion it would not be far from the truth," he observed. "The Oxford of the present day is, unhappily, more than half infidel."

"Well, then, Mr. Knowles, on your own showing, poor Mr. Degg no more deserves to be sent to Coventry on that account than the most distinguished men of your own Alma Mater, so you are bound to judge him mercifully."

"She can hold her own pretty well, can't she?" said Oswald. "Take some champagne, Florry, and leave Degg to his doom. If there's justice in England, he'll soon be in limbo."

"So you are going to Glenleven?" said Knowles, addressing me, by way of changing the subject; "I suppose it's your first visit?"

"Yes," I replied, "ever since I've been in England, I've been so continually hearing of Glenleven, that I'm glad at last to satisfy my curiosity."

"It's a wonderful place, certainly," he observed; "I spent a week there last Lent, and enjoyed it immensely."

"Really, Mr. Knowles? Wasn't it rather a schismatical piece of enjoyment?" inquired Florence, "at least according to our Anglican notions?"

"No, indeed, Miss Oswald," said Knowles, who seemed to have an unflinching command of temper; "I, for one, deeply deplore our unhappy separations."

Florence seemed to be considering how best to aim her weapon in retort, when I stepped in to rescue him from further badgering. "If you know Glenleven," I said, "you are probably acquainted with Leven's friend, the young German painter."

"Mr. Werner, you mean—Brother Norbert, as he is now called? yes, I know him very well."

"Of course we all know Mr. Werner," said Mary; "he was only an amateur painter, you know; in reality he was rather an important personage."

"How a man with his genius could go and bury it on the moors!" said Florence; "It was an awful sacrifice."

"What a girl you are, with your everlasting *genius*," said Oswald; "I believe women think every man with a black beard is a genius."

"I never thought you one, Charley," said his incorrigible sister; "so I suppose you being fair accounts for it."

"Indeed, I hope he is not," said Mary; "geniuses seem to me to be always doing or saying something they'd better have left alone."

"One of Mary's home thrusts," said Oswald; "how d'ye like it, Florry?"

"There's a good deal of truth in the remark," said Wilfrid; "a genius is an erratic thing at best—much like a comet, as brilliant and as unsubstantial. For practical ends, a stable-lantern is infinitely more to the purpose."

"I suppose both comets and geniuses have their uses in our system," I observed, "though everybody isn't sharp-sighted enough to discover it."

Florence gave me a quick glance of inspection, as though she might possibly some day or other find it worth her while to speak to me.

"The worst of it is," said Oswald, "that so many of your geniuses are just nothing but sky-rockets after all, and go out whilst you are staring at them."

"Well," said Florence, "sky-rockets are beautiful, and beauty is always of use; I appeal to Mr. Aubrey."

It struck me that she said this as it were to test me, and see what stuff I was made of. "To answer satisfactorily," I replied, "I fear I must be a bore, and ask you what you mean by beauty?"

"Well, what do you mean by it?"

"Suppose I were to call it the *splendor of goodness*?"

"Ah! that will do famously," she replied; "if goodness is beauty, then beauty is goodness; so we conclude in favor of the sky-rockets."

"Sad sophistry, Miss Oswald," said Wilfrid Knowles, as he rose to open the door for the ladies. But he soon followed them, leaving Oswald and myself *tête-à-tête*.

Poor Oswald yawned as if relieved from a mental tension more or less irksome. "I suppose we must not grudge women the use of their tongues," he said, "though they talk sad nonsense with them. I always hold that what claws are to the lion, and a beak to the eagle, that her tongue is to a woman."

"I should think old Mary's tongue was a peaceable member," I replied.

"Pretty well, though she can come out now and then with a plain truth or two, as she did just now on the matter of genius. I wish she could put some of her common sense into poor Florry."

"Your sister has a touch of the erratic gift herself, I should suspect," I said, "and, if so, you must make allowances."

"Oh, yes, and more than a touch; she is always at work on some new bother. What ever can set women on such scents I don't understand; and it's bad altogether, you know, and unhinged her."

"People have a way now-a-days," I said, "of looking unhinged and unhappy; it's the fashion."

"No," said Oswald, "I don't call Florry happy; she's always wanting a career of some sort, and can't settle down to humdrum. Mary is the only person she really minds, and Mary gets Wilfrid Knowles here to meet her, because she hopes he'll do Florry good; but I think it's a mistake; he only rouses her love of contradiction."

We talked about other things for a while, and then adjourned to the drawing-room, where we found Wilfrid and Mary deep in the discussion of parochial affairs, and Florence at the further end of the room, playing a game of fox-and-goose with Edward, while the two little girls looked on, Alexia acting as self-elected umpire. I ventured to approach, and was greeted with the information that "Aunt Florence was losing all her geese!"

"I wish I thought so," said Florence, with a sigh. Then,

as the last white peg was snapped up by the inexorable fox, she resigned the board to the children, and graciously condescended to allow me to sit beside her. "I have not yet thanked you," she said, "for taking the part of poor genius. I really thought 'Father Wilfrid' (as they call him) would have condemned us for life to the use of stable-lanterns."

"Possibly," I said, "if one had to find one's way on a dark night, they might have a trifling advantage over sky-rockets."

"Yes, but one isn't always groping one's way in the dark."

"Well, really, when you come back to civilized society after ten years' absence, it's not much unlike what you find people doing."

"How so?"

"Why, everyone seems on the look-out for first principles which one would have thought they had learned centuries ago from their grandmothers."

"I think I understand what you mean," said Florence, musingly; "but it must be so when people begin to think for themselves; everyone can't exactly rest satisfied with his grandmother's speculations."

"No, but my complaint is, that these independent thinkers pick everything to pieces, and leave it so."

"That is to say," said Florence, "they analyze, and how else can they hope to get at truth?"

"Those who analyze," I said, "should know how to reconstruct, otherwise they are in the position of people who take their watches to pieces, and cannot put them together again. They would have done better to have trusted a watchmaker."

"Your simile has the vice of all similes," she replied; "it seems to say something, and it says nothing. I can trust my watch with another to regulate, but not my independent convictions."

"But, my dear Miss Oswald, how many persons now-a-days possess such a commodity? All the people I know take their convictions second-hand, from the *Times* newspaper, or the *Saturday Review*, or maybe from the *Western Censor*. I really hardly know one man who thinks for himself, unless it be the Duke of Leven."

"Yes, the duke *is* original, certainly," she replied; "I don't agree with him, of course; but he is thoroughly in earnest, and I respect him immensely."

"And Father Wilfrid, is not he also somewhat of a doctor in Israel?"

She looked disdainfully in the direction where he sat: "In his own opinion, no doubt, but not in mine. I like the *real thing*, Mr. Aubrey, whatever be its kind. Charley's champagne was splendid; but if he were to give us 'gooseberry' with a champagne ticket, I should call him an impostor." With that she walked to the open window, where Wilfrid presently joined her, and soon we heard them engaged afresh in a wordy war.

"That's the way she treats the impostor," said Oswald, who had caught her last words as he approached. "A most wonderful thing is woman!"

This philosophic remark closed my study of character for that evening, but when I retired to my room I could not help going over it all again, as a lawyer studies the points of his brief. "She talks at random," I said to myself, "and half of it is *chaff*. She thinks amazingly well of her own powers, and has read a prodigious quantity of rubbish. She would have no objection to be thought an infidel, because it would be jaunty and defiant. If ever she becomes one, it will be the result of over-preaching; if she is ever saved from becoming one, it will not be by the ministry of Father Wilfrid."

In the correctness of this last conclusion, I was next day confirmed, and it happened thus: Exdale was in the parish of Oakham, but possessed a church of its own, served by one of the Oakham curates, and just now the thoughts of Mr. Knowles were busily engaged with plans for its restoration. The architect, Mr. Buttermilk, was to meet him at Exdale, and had brought with him drawings and elevations in great store, the inspection of which furnished the drawing-room party with an agreeable morning's occupation.

Screened by my newspaper, much edifying talk over sedilia and holy water stoups fell upon my ear; and I was wondering a little about the exact utility of the last-named article in a Protestant church, when Florence joined in the conversation and at once hit the blot. "The sedilia are to sit in, I presume," she said, "and will save the expense of chairs; but what will you do with the holy water stoups?"

"It is our wish," said Buttermilk, with professional unction, "to reconstruct this beautiful little edifice, as it existed in the fourteenth century, and to do that completely none even of these minor accessories should be omitted."

"But will there be holy water in them?" inquired Florence, in the tone of one innocently desirous of information.

"Probably not," said Knowles, "but they will bear their witness."

"Oh, I see," said Florence, gravely; "holy water stoups and no holy water: let us proceed."

The next drawing was produced; it represented an elaborately carved tomb or sepulchre, to be erected on the north wall of the chancel.

"How beautiful!" said Mary; "but isn't it an odd place for a monument!"

"It is not a monument, my dear Mrs. Oswald," said Knowles, "but a *sepulchre*, such as was required for the touching and significant ceremony anciently practised on Easter morning," and he proceeded to read from a glossary of Gothic art the description of an elaborate rite, "now wholly obsolete."

"I was thinking it must be so," said Florence, who had listened attentively. "I have often gone to the services in Holy Week when I've been abroad: the music is so beautiful; but I never saw anything at all like what you have described."

"No," said Knowles (who, I suppose, overlooked me behind my newspaper), "it is one among many examples of the way in which the modern Roman Church has departed from the ancient practice."

"And which, no doubt, the modern English Church has preserved with jealous veneration," said his tormentor.

"If she has not preserved it, she will very probably revive it," said Knowles. "If we continue at our present pace, the English branch of the Church Catholic will ere long have the most magnificent ritual in Western Christendom."

"I don't doubt it," said Florence, "and I tell you what it will then remind me of; a grand display of gold and silver dishes with nothing to eat upon the table."

"Would you like the display any the better," said Knowles, "if the dishes were full of viands?"

"Perhaps not," said Florence, "except in this, that the banquet would then be a reality; whereas, in the present case, it is a cruel sham."

"Do not mistake me, Miss Oswald," said Knowles, with great earnestness. "I respect your love of what is real and honest; I do indeed; were we aiming at the revival of external ceremonies only, it would be as you say, a cruel sham; but ceremonial is not an empty shell; in time it will bring back the realities."

"Never!" said Florence, with a vehement emphasis, which made Mr. Buttermilk look up through his spectacles in some alarm; "never! your realities are long ago dead and buried."

"Are they?" I said as I caught her eye over my newspaper.

"Yes," she replied, leaving the group of archaeologists, and coming over to my quarter of the apartment, "can you dispute it?"

"I dispute the possibility of a reality ever *dying*, whatever pains may be taken to bury it."

She remained silent; and, as I looked at her, I too felt a kind of respect for that scorn of shams which was manifestly genuine in her. I thought of the impression I had myself received long years ago, when Grant had told us the story of his life, and how for the first time it had opened my heart to a sense of the realities of faith.

"May I tell you a story, Miss Oswald?" I said.

"I should like it of all things," she replied; "and perhaps it

will help to restore my temper. Suppose you tell it in the garden, for if you begin here we shall be swallowed up in the mediæval Maelstrom."

So to the garden we made our way, and finding a seat adapted for story-telling, I began at the beginning, and related my friend's history and experiences as well as my memory served me. She listened, at first with curiosity only, but soon with deeper interest; and before I had concluded, the tears which gathered in her eyes had almost softened into beauty her haughty features.

"Yes, that is real, if you like," she said. "That mass in the barn listened to by a crowd of shepherds and bush-rangers, with the old priest standing up there in the midst, and speaking out to them like a man; and the others, astounded, out to the heart, conscience-stricken! What a scene! One longs to have witnessed it!"

"But what *made* it real?" I asked.

"The man was in earnest," she replied, "and so was his audience. There was no affectation about mediæval vestments, or obsolete ceremonies; he spoke from his heart and they listened with theirs, and that was all about it."

"Then you don't think it was in any way explained by the fact, then he spoke as one having authority, who had the truth to give?"

"The truth! authority!" she repeated in a tone, as though the words conveyed no definite sense to her understanding. "Perhaps I don't quite catch your meaning; I cannot see how one man has any more *authority* to talk than another; but if he says bravely what he thinks strongly, it is truth to him; and I listen with respect, whether the words come from Pius IX. or from Buddha."

Yes, that is the sort of thing we have to listen to now-a-days from our sisters and daughters. Of course they don't know what they are talking about, and not two of them would be able to tell you who Buddha was, or when he lived. But what does that matter? It is the last new slang which they have picked up from the last periodical, and it sounds free and slashing; so it is quite in harmony with that peculiar style of dress which finds favor in proportion as it is manly.

"That view of truth is rather self-destructive," I observed; "a dozen or two of those same strong truths would soon reduce each other to negations."

"After the fashion of Kilkenny cats," she replied. "I see what you are driving at. Mr. Knowles' favorite theory of ob-jective truth, as he calls it; I have listened to it till I am weary. No, no, Mr. Aubrey, it would never do for me; you must leave me at liberty to seek for truth wherever it blossoms, like those bees there, that are gathering their honey from every flower in the garden."

I felt reluctant to diminish the impression which Grant's story had made on her, by plunging her afresh into captious argument; though I could not help calling to mind her own words the evening before, on the peculiar vice of similes. At that moment Mary approached, indicating the break-up of the Archaeological Committee; Florence made room on the bench beside her, and informed her sister-in-law, that I had been "telling her all about the Duke of Leven."

"Ah!" said Mary, "how well I remember the evening he told us that story; I could have listened till midnight. He's so changed since then: don't you think so, Jack?"

"Yes," I said, "he is changed, but I think it is for the better."

"Better in what?" asked Florence.

"He's less harsh and dogmatic," I said; "he used to have a way of blurting out his views, as if prepared to run his head against everybody's garden wall. Time has softened his rough edges."

"And other things besides time," said Mary; "he has had his sorrows."

"Indeed!" I said. "I have heard nothing about them; but I suspect his wealth, after all, has been his chief trouble."

"An original kind of sorrow, that, to which most persons would resign themselves if the chance were given them."

"It is so, I assure you," I said. "He is weighed down with sense of responsibility, and, wishing to do the greatest possible amount of good, the actual results are always falling short of his desires."

"Well," said Florence, "it is a noble weakness. He's mistaken of course—most people that I know of are; but at last he's mistaken splendidly."

CHAPTER X.

DEGG'S ESCAPE.

OUR conversation was interrupted by the arrival of the very person under discussion; the duke's carriage was seen coming along the drive, and we assembled before the door to meet him. He was always at home at Exdale, where he seemed to shake off the shackles of his position and move at ease. Thither he came at brief intervals to enjoy the sunshine of the family circle, where the children expected "Duke," as they called him, to tell them stories about kangaroos and dodos, and where he took counsel on many practical points with that wise old Mary. Greetings over, he was shown to his room, whither, at his request, I accompanied him to take care of sundry packets of unanswered letters, the daily acknowledgement of which was one of the duties which he held sacred. Before we again descended to the drawing-rooms I took occasion to inform him of the presence of Miss Oswald.

"We have had some passages-at-arms together," I said; "What do you think of her?"

"Much like the rest of her genus," he replied. "They would be offended with us if we were to call them the *softer sex*, since they've taken to chaff and yachting buttons."

"You are not often so severe," I replied. "In this instance do believe there is something hidden under the chaff. I begin to suspect the existence of a heart."

"She has a *head*, I know, and one famously full of rubbish; as to the other appendage, I will take it on your word."

"Do you know, Grant, I wish you would take her in hand; she's much like taming a wild cat, I know, but it would be worth the labor."

Grant shook his head. "I know Florence well," he said; "she rises to an argument like a trout to a fly, and would stand up against an archangel for pure love of contradiction."

"If the archangel were clothed in the garb of a High Church parson, I believe she would; but the tears were in her eyes when I talked to her to-day about Australia and Father Daly."

"So you've been blabbing, and made the little girl cry over our story, and were moved by the 'watery witness in her eye' to believe in her possession of a heart? Really, Jack, it savors of the sentimental."

"No, no, Grant, nothing of the sort, I do assure you; but the poor child is in want of a better helping hand than Wilfrid Knowles, who does his very best, and only drives her in a contrary direction."

"Well," said Grant. "we'll think it over; but the taming of young ladies is not exactly my vocation."

We went down stairs, and were met by Oswald, who barely gave himself time to shake hands with the duke, before he brought forth the iniquity of Degg, and demanded instant justice. "You'll prosecute, of course; he hasn't the least rag of conscience, and at last we shall be rid of the rascal."

"I am sorry to disappoint you," said Grant, in a very unexcited tone, "but I don't intend to prosecute."

"Not prosecute!" cried Oswald. "But, my dear Leven, have you read his last week's article?"

"Yes," replied the duke. "Verney put it into my hand as I was getting into the carriage, and I read it coming along."

"Well?"

"Well?"

"You won't let the fellow escape this time with impunity?"

"Yes, my dear Oswald, life is too short to spend it prosecuting rascals; if Degg has a fancy for publishing fancy biogra-

phies of me, he is perfectly welcome; I shall neither bring him into court, nor shall he bring me."

Oswald's disappointment was intense; but something in the duke's manner made it difficult for him to pursue the subject, and he had to content himself with an expressive gesture which if interpreted, might be understood as meaning either despair at the eccentricity of his friend, or a fervent desire of impaling the unhappy culprit.

During dinner, and the hour or two of conversation that followed, the duke was chiefly absorbed by Wilfrid Knowles, who talked to him about Glenleven, and religious rules, and the practices of the Fathers in the Desert, till Florence could not conceal her impatience, and even Oswald fidgeted. I thought that Grant himself must be tired of it, but, if so, he did not betray it in his manner; he appeared to be giving Wilfrid his whole attention, and was always courteous and kind.

As soon as she found herself out of earshot, Florence gave vent to her indignation. "Your duke should certainly be canonized," she said; "he has done two heroic acts this day; he pardoned Degg, and listened patiently to Father Wilfrid for the space of two hours."

"Oswald will never forgive him the first achievement, nor you the second."

"Well, but are they not both rather of the supernatural order?"

"Probably," I replied: "as yet, I confess, I do not understand his motives in the matter of Degg."

"If Mr. Knowles would but be quiet for a minute, I would make bold to inquire; can't you create a diversion?"

The diversion, however, was effected by the duke himself, who, having succeeded in obtaining a short respite, took refuge in an armchair beside us.

"So it is really true, then," said Florence, "that Degg is not to be delivered over to the tormentors? I assure you, Charley here was already preparing the faggots."

"I daresay he would have run a fair chance of burning in that fourteenth century Mr. Knowles is so fond of," replied the duke; "but we are happily fallen on days of toleration."

Florence paused; and it was with the least possible amount of timidity that she said at last: "Is it very impertinent? I don't mean it so; but may I ask your reasons?"

"Reasons for what?"

"For not punishing him. Was it generosity?"

"Well, I'm not very fond of revenge, or of law courts either. I don't believe they're the best places in the world for fostering charity."

"And was that all?"

"No, not quite, perhaps," and it was his turn to hesitate.

"Well, Miss Oswald, I'll say to you what I could not say just now to your brother, when he was at such a white heat of frenzy. All circumstances considered, I should feel it shocking if Degg were to be held up to judgment for libelling *me*, when for these many years past law court after law court has declared it impossible to call him to account for libelling my Master."

"Your Master?" ejaculated Florence.

"Yes; why do you look so astonished?"

"I don't think I exactly understand."

"Why, my dear Miss Oswald, it's what every one knows; this poor creature has found it to his profit to put out week after week the most offensive articles on religious matters. He has not been content with assailing what he calls sacerdotalism in all its branches; he has attacked Christianity along the whole line, the most sacred things and the most sacred persons. I should not like to offend your ears by repeating the titles of some of his things; yet for all this blasphemy he has escaped scot-free; and after that, do you suppose I would allow damages to be given against him for some silly lies about my character? It would go against one's instincts of faith: at least that is my feeling."

There was a long pause: Florence leant her head on her hand, and seemed to be really thinking; Grant took up a book of photographs, and I sat by and watched the scene,

which deeply interested me. At last she spoke: "Faith—yes, it must be a wonderful thing; a wonderful motive-power for those who possess it."

"And don't you possess it?"

"No, and I suppose I never shall. Don't be shocked. It must be a grand thing to believe as you do; but to some minds, even whilst they admire, it is simply impossible."

"Do you mean deliberately to say that you believe *nothing*?" said Grant, looking at her with those grave, penetrating eyes that were so rarely turned to meet the gaze of another. She seemed almost to tremble under their power.

"No, not quite that; but not what you would call believing."

"Let us come to particulars," said Grant, "for I don't believe that you believe nothing. And if there is any one thing you do believe, obey it, and it will lead you further."

"I don't understand," said Florence. "Please to explain yourself."

"Well, I will take the first element of faith; you believe in God?"

"Of course," she replied.

"And that He made you?"

She was silent.

"You see there is no alternative. He either made you, or you are a bundle of fortuitous atoms, that have come together of themselves."

Florence still hesitated; to say Yes, would, she well knew, pledge her to fling to the owls and the bats a vast assortment of scientific semi-infidel views she had been fond of ventilating; and yet to say No in plain English, and to such an interrogator, was more than she dared.

"I suppose I believe it," she said, at length. "Of course we know so little of these matters."

"Well, never mind that; you do believe it, that is enough: you believe that He made you, body and soul: for I suppose you believe that you *have* a soul; you don't think you are nothing but a body, a handful of dust, do you?"

Again Florence leant her head on her hand, and the answer was, as it were, torn from her: "No, I believe that I have a soul."

"Why?" said Grant, "why do you believe it?"

She looked at him steadily. "Because I *feel* it," she answered.

"Dust thou art, to dust returnest,"
Was not spoken of the soul."

"Well, that is, perhaps, not the very safest ground of faith, but it will do for the present. Now, listen to me. These things are not intellectual views; they are facts, living realities. If you hold them as intellectual views merely, you don't believe them; but if you *do* believe them, you must obey them."

"How?" said Florence. "How can I obey a fact?"

"In this way," he replied: "If there is a God, he must be worshipped. If He made you, He is your Master; yes, you don't like the word, I see; you shrink from it, it makes you angry. But it is not the less true for that; He is your Master, and holds you in His hand, and you must serve Him. And if you have a soul, an immortal soul, as you say you believe, you must care for it as you care for nothing else; and this taking care of an immortal soul is a very serious business."

There was not another word spoken for several minutes; at last Florence raised her head from her hand, and in a timid, subdued tone, murmured, "Thank you." The duke nodded kindly to her, and she went away to the piano; and to excuse her unusual silence, spent the rest of the evening singing Oswald some of his favorite songs.

CHAPTER XL

CAPITULATION.

The next morning when we met at breakfast Florence was silent and abstracted. She abstained alike from provoking retort and audacious assertion, and allowed Mr. Knowles to deal forth much edifying talk without so much as a single con-

tradiction; nay, more, when Oswald rallied her on her untactiturnity, she could find nothing more brilliant to say by way of answer than that it was so hot.

Plans for the day were brought under discussion, including a visit to Exdale Church, Mr. Knowles being desirous that questions in debate about the restoration should be settled the spot. Mary good-naturedly consented to accompany him, but Florence pleaded a previous engagement. She was pledged, she said, to escort Edward and the children on a fishing expedition, and shortly after breakfast we saw them depart in a pony-chaise, with a great array of baskets and fishing-rods, Florence herself being the driver.

Oswald had challenged the duke and myself to a ride over property. There was much to examine and talk about—proposed improvements, the repairing of farms and rebuilding cottages, on all which questions Grant was an authority, and displayed his accustomed clear head and knowledge of business. It was late in the afternoon when we returned from our ride, and on reaching the house, we found that the fishing party had preceded us only by a few minutes, and were in the act of descending from the pony-chaise.

"What a lather old Dobbin is in!" said Oswald. "What have you been doing with him, Florry?"

"Dobbin was naughty, and ran away," said Mary.

"He wouldn't have run," said Alexia, "if Aunt Florry had given him the whip."

"Naughty ponies deserve the whip," said Florence. "No, be quick or you'll be late for tea, and I shall get a scolding from the nursery authorities," and the two little girls disappeared from the scene, Edward remaining behind to witness the departure of the horses for the stable. Before she turned into the house, Florence patted the old pony kindly, and much of him. I looked at her, and I thought she looked pale and agitated.

Grant drew Edward aside. "Has anything been wrong?" said. "Did old Dobbin really bolt?"

"It was Florence made him," said Edward. "You see he came home over the downs, and when we reached Baker's (that's where the road turns sharp off from the cliff into a lane), a white donkey came out from the hedge, and started him, and he shied, and backed to the edge. So Florence gave him a sharp cut, and he set off on a gallop, and Lexy called him running away. He pulled up when he came to the hill, and Florry turned round, and said: 'That was a close shave, I was frightened?' And I was a little, you know; but I told her I had said a 'Hail Mary' and an 'Angel of God' that we might not go over the cliff, and we didn't."

"I see," said Grant, and he said no more.

We all met in the drawing-room before dinner.

"How pale you look, Florence," said Mary.

"No wonder," said Oswald. "That very high-mettled steed Dobbin, is reported to have bolted with her."

"Oh, it was only the children's nonsense," said Florence. "Dobbin gave a stretch or two just after we passed Baker's Bit, and Alexia liked to call it running away. By-bye, Charley, I wonder you don't get posts or something put there; the road goes amazingly near the edge of the cliff."

"Of course it does," said Oswald. "That's where the baker's cart went down, horse and all, so, at least, says Exdale tradition."

"Well, I think you ought to prevent the butcher from following him," said Florence; and there the matter dropped.

Guests arrived, and we went to dinner. Florence had her next door neighbor an old gentleman who appeared to prosy; but she gave him her undivided attention, or seemed to do so. For all conversational purposes, however, she was tinguished, and I was left to speculate whether this result was due to the achievements of the duke or of Dobbin.

During the rest of the evening, Grant had to receive and turn the attentions of the company invited to meet him.

He was one who never forgot, and he watched his opportunity. At a convenient moment, when the buzz was general, he meant to approach Florry, and address her without observa-

gaged at a chess-table within ear-shot, I was able, while considering the next move of my queen, to catch their dialogue. "Am I right," said Grant, "in supposing that the drive to Baker's Bit, was not altogether pleasant?"

He looked at him. "Has Edward told you?" she said; and, after a moment, "I don't want Mary to hear about it; the pony backed; it's a horrid place, we were all but fall-

"Was there really danger?" he inquired.

"Yes," she replied; "the left wheel must have been over; don't know how much Edward saw, but I could see clear on the cliff, two hundred feet to the bottom."

"A terrible moment," said the duke. "I have known such my life; they condense into a second the sensations of years."

"They do, indeed," said Florence, "and they clear away my clouds." Then she was silent, but it was a silence that seemed to indicate that there was something more she half-dared to say. Grant did not hurry her; he held his tongue, and gave her time to gather up her courage; and at last she found her voice, but it was a very husky one. "I remembered your words; I shall never forget them. It is all confusion now, they will lead me somewhere, I don't yet know where. Only this I want to say: *When I looked down that precipice, it was as if I had been my Master.*"

"And I think that is check-mate," said my adversary, a mild-looking person, astonished at his own success; but in truth, my mind had been rather in my ears than my eyes, and in my joy at Florry's capitulation I lost my queen and my game.

"It's all right," I said; "some losses are a real victory."

He stared, as well he might; and I daresay it was next day that he wrote in Exdale that Mrs. Oswald's brother was more than a little eccentric.

"You will let me give you your revenge," he said, replacing his pieces, whilst I continued to play the eaves-dropper; but he was little more to hear; only the duke's parting words. Well, that's all as it should be; and if you remember my words, don't forget little Edward's."

"How so?"

"At the edge of the precipice he prayed, and you were told; it was a lesson."

"Yes, yes," said Florence. "I know what you mean; I thought of it when he told me."

And so the conversation ended.

The next morning we left Exdale for a week at Glenleven. Edward was left behind, Florence pledging herself that he could come to no harm, and the riding and fishing should not together banish the Latin Grammar. Grant was silent for a while as we drove away; at last he said:

"You were right about that poor child, and I was wrong. He is always wrong in judging that people have no hearts. Everyone has one, only they can't always find it."

"I suspect Florry found hers at the edge of Baker's Bit," I said.

"Yes, and she was a brave girl, too, to hold her tongue about that adventure for fear of frightening Mary. Most men would have jabbered about it for a fortnight."

"The daughters of Eve do not certainly owe you much in the way of compliment," I said; "but my belief is that Florence needs the faith to rise far above the average. She is a good way off yet, though."

"Yes," said Grant; "but she is in the right way. We must let them to say a lot of rosaries for her at Glenleven."

CHAPTER XII.

GLENLEVEN.

A drive of eighteen miles brought us to the outskirts of the forest among which Leven had planted his Christian colony. From that semi-mountainous district, topped with granite peaks, and girded by its forests, more than one river took its course, and found its way through plains and valleys to the northern Channel. It was a lonely, unenclosed, uninhabited district, sufficiently far removed from cities and the hum of men

to savor of the wilderness. How beautiful I felt it! and how my companion seemed to revel in the freedom and freshness of the mountain air and the solitude. At an opening of the hills we came rather suddenly on the village, formed of well-built cottages, not boasting of what Leven would once have called the intolerable affectation of Oakham picturesqueness, but still pleasant to the eye, and as he was careful to inform me, rejoicing in good ventilation and drainage. The houses and the walls were all built of granite; it was the cheapest material because close at hand, and it gave a grand, solid, and somewhat ancient tone to the erections. Leven did not fail to point out to me, as we passed, the goodly structure, from which swung the sign of "*the Leven Arms*," the tavern, that is, where, as he said, "Nothing and nobody was licensed to be drunk on the premises." A little out of the village, in a charming spot, fenced about by beech-woods, and looking down the valley, was the Duke's house, a modest little cottage attached to a small farm-house, containing six rooms, to which it was his custom to retire when he wanted rest and solitude.

He entered it with the glee of a man who finds himself at home. Two sitting-rooms, and a couple of bedrooms, with one for his attendant. This was all. The furniture was plain and solid, the bedrooms having the rural look of cottage neatness and poverty. Of the sitting-rooms, one was a dining parlor, the other his private study; it looked into a little garden, where grew some common flowers, stocks and wall-flowers, and roses, and huge beds of mignonette, "my mother's favorite flowers," as he said, the perfume from which was borne through the open window. I looked around; on the wall were one or two prints of devotion, in plain black frames, a book-case tolerably well filled, and some plain, old-fashioned furniture. "Now this is a Paradise, old fellow," said Leven; "we'll have dinner first (no French cookery, you'll remember), and then go down to the monastery."

I shared his happiness; to have him here in this corner of the world, away from his letters and his cares, in the free, fragrant air of the mountains; it was inexpressibly delightful; and no French cookery was ever done justice to as was that first homely little dinner in Glenleven Hermitage.

We rose from table, and sailed forth on our road to the monastery. He led the way through the little garden, and we had not taken two steps when we came in view of the majestic pile through an opening in the trees, and as we stood to gaze at it, the deep tone of its chiming bells came up from the valley. It was built, like everything else at Glenleven, of granite, and seemed extensive; but what struck me most was the vast size of the Abbey Church, and its roof of loftiest proportions.

"Aye, you'll see all about that presently," said Leven. "I'll just tell you, to begin with, that the monks were their own architects. I put in my word as to size, and so on, but the grandeur is in their own design; monks should best know what monks require."

We reached the gates, and ringing at the door, were ushered by a lay brother into the guest-room, which looked monastic enough in the severity of its fittings. In a minute or two the door opened, and two blackrobed figures entered; one, to whom Leven knelt for a blessing, and whom I guessed to be the abbot, and another young man, whose expressive countenance beamed with pleasure, as he greeted his friend; I did not need to be told it was Werner.

I had never before been in the company of religious, and imagination helped impressions which under any circumstances would have been powerful. The abbot, like most of the community, was German, and after a few minutes of pleasant, easy talking, they told us that vespers were about to be sung, and conducted us to the church.

As I entered, I was transfixed. I had been prepared for vastness, but not for such as this; nor yet for the wonderful religiousness of that stately severity. A cruciform building; the two transepts forming separate chapels under the two great towers, a nave supported on enormous granite pillars, and beyond, a choir for the monks, separated from the nave by a light low screen, and fitted with oaken stalls. Above rose arch upon

arch, catching the evening rays, and seeming to soar away into amazing heights of flickering light and shadow. Presently there entered the long line of black-robed monks; the stalls were filled, and after a minute or two of silence, one clear voice began the office; and then an anthem was intoned, and then burst forth the full joyous harmony of organ and choir.

What sounds those were to which, for the first time I listened, awaking in me a new sense, yet one to which my whole nature seemed responsive. It was the voice of the Church, the voice of the ancient mother. How the music yielded to the words and became their interpreter, translating their sense from the ear to the heart, and from the heart to the ear! How impossible it was to associate the memories of the world, or the pleadings of flesh and blood, to any of those tones to which I listened! It only lasted too short a time, and when it ceased I found I had been weeping.

But it ceased at last, and then Leven touched me, and bade me look at the figures in niches which adorned the choir above the stalls of the religious. Some were kings, some bishops, some hooded monks, in stone, habited like those of flesh and blood, who sang beneath them. "A devotion of my own," he said, "the English saints, Oswald and Edmund, and the two Edwards, kings of our race; and our bishops, St. Augustine and St. Ethelwold; and the good Odo, St. Dunstan, and the two St. Thomases; and dear old St. Richard, of Chichester; and English Benedictines, too, St. Bede, St. Benedict, St. Aldhelm, and St. Wolstan! What a galaxy of saints, and what saints they were, yet who in England cares now to think of them!"

We walked around the choir to the Lady Chapel, rich in marbles, and delicately ornamented; then passing back, the duke pointed out to me the two transepts, divided off by gilded gates, the metal-work of the Glenleven workshops.

"This northern transept," he said, "contains a treasure, the shrine of an English saint, the brave Saxon king whose remains lay for many centuries in a ruined abbey of the county. It was to be had for money (the ruin, I mean), so I bought it. We disinterred the sacred relics, and brought them here, and now they rest there over the altar."

We knelt and prayed before the shrine of the glorious martyr, and then rising, we passed to the southern transept. "To whom is this chapel dedicated?" I whispered. "To St. John, the titular of the Church, and my own dear father's patron;" and then I perceived that this chapel contained two altar tombs, on which reposed carved figures with hands clasped in prayer, and I guessed it all in a minute.

The church was the mausoleum of his parents, and it was here he had laid them to rest, when he had caused the remains of those he had loved so dearly to be sent back to their native country. He did not speak, for he saw that I understood it. We went up to the tombs; one clad in ducal robes, with his feet resting on his good dog, his grave, manly features carved with exquisite care, and the hands joined upon the breast. The tomb itself displayed no carving beyond the quatrefoiled panels, and at one end the family arms; but a brass fillet ran round the upper surface, engraved with these words in old English characters: "If they had been mindful of the country whence they came out, they had, doubtless, the time to return; but now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He hath prepared for them a city." (*Heb. xi. 15 16.*)

I passed to the other tomb, and thought I recognized in the sweet, matronly features of her whose effigy reposed there, a likeness to my friend; then I read the inscription which bade me pray for the soul of John William, Marquis of Carstairs, and his wife, Eleanor; and kneeling together, Leven and I softly recited a *De Profundis*. As we arose from our knees, I observed a brass plate let into the floor in front of the two monuments. "My own resting-place," said Leven, as I pointed to it. "Some day, perhaps not very far off, I shall be lying here at their feet."

We left the church, but his last words struck to my heart, and I looked at him earnestly. "All right, old fellow," he said,

"don't spin cobwebs out of what I said just now. I meant nothing in particular."

"I sometimes fancy it is not all right," I replied. "You wear yourself out with many cares, and too little recreation."

"Well, *this* is recreation, anyhow," he said; "just look at the light behind those granite peaks! Let's go down to the river, it's just the hour for the otters."

CHAPTER XIII.

UTOPIA.

It was about the fourth day after our establishment at Glenleven that the postbag brought, among other contents, a packet from Exdale, and a newspaper forwarded by Oswald. Grant tossed me the paper, which I opened; and whilst he was busy with his letters, I had the gratification of reading a lengthy report in the *Exshire Gazette*, of a meeting of the "United Colliers" which had been held at Bradford, to hear the address of the illustrious orators, Messrs. Degg and Redfever, and pass certain resolutions under their inspiration. The meeting, we were told, had been most enthusiastic, and terminated with a procession through the streets, in the course of which the windows of the Catholic Presbytery were smashed, and an effigy of the Duke, as "the Arch-enemy of Progress," burnt before the Leven Institute.

All this I proceeded to retail to Grant, as he finished his breakfast, nor did it seem in any way to diminish his appetite. "And these are the fellows on whose benefit you have spent the best part of the last ten years," I exclaimed. "No wonder Oswald has marked the column with such a note of indignation!"

"I am afraid, Jack, that the result shows there is not enough left for ten years more."

"That is your way of taking it, is it?" I replied. "But you tell me, Grant, do you never feel discouraged?"

"Discouraged? of course, it's the commonest and the stupidest of temptations—something shows you how little you have succeeded in doing, and, therefore, you resolve to mend by doing less, instead of trying to do more."

I remained silent.

"Now look here, Jack, you are thinking of those colliers, and their public demonstration against me in the streets of Bradford. But what is the truth of the matter? Degg and the Free Thought Committee distributed the drink, and furnished the inflammatory speeches and the effigy, and the poor fellow enjoyed the excitement of burning it exactly as they would have enjoyed a dog-fight. If you say that they are deplorable, brutalized, I agree; and it does but show the burden that lies on those who have property, means, influence, and education—everything, in short, which those poor outcasts have not."

"And what is to be the end of it?" I said; "because, things stand here," and I held up the paper, "I hold that they are discouraging."

"The end of it, Jack, is neither in your power nor in mine to foresee," said Grant. "I think we may safely affirm that the wolf will not lie down with the lamb in our day, nor at our bidding; but that is no reason why we should not do what comes to hand in that direction."

"Ten years ago you thought very differently about some of these questions," I said, as I recalled the flashing eyes and vivid speech of the Grant of former years, and involuntarily compared them with the tones and looks of to-day, which spoke truly of a patience rooted in deepest resignation.

"I daresay I did," he replied. "At twenty-five it seems an easy thing to keep the commandments, and make all the world do so, too; but, bless your heart, Jack, a little experience makes a man take a very different view of the meaning of the word success."

"And what do you mean by success, then?" I asked.

"Ah, that is a question," he replied, leaning back in his chair, and looking into space, as though considering. "There is nothing I love like a definition when one can get at it; success

is—the power of persevering at a noble aim. That is about the thing, as I take it.”

“What, no results!” I exclaimed, “positively none?”

“Who said so?” he replied. “Who could suppose such a case as unflagging perseverance at a noble end that was not crowned? But how, or with what, is quite another question. In certain cases probably with martyrdom: that might not be success in the world’s estimation, but it would certainly be a crown.”

“You are taking a very high flight, my dear Grant,” I said “and I will admit all its incontrovertibility; but now to descend a mile or two, and to get on a lower level, are we to look for no results in the commonplace sense of the word?”

“I do not say so,” he replied. “All I mean is that you must not look for what is startling and pictorial. You must not look for larger success than the Gospel.”

“I imagined that the success of the Gospel had been exactly of the character you describe,” I said.

“Really? Do you mean to say that the impression left on your mind after laying down one of those villainous newspapers is that the whole world is going the way of the Gospel—of the beatitudes? All I can say is it is not my idea of the Gospel.

“I wish,” I said, “you would clear up your idea a little; at present I can catch only half a view of it.”

“Well,” he replied, “the case seems a simple one enough. There is a sense in which the success of the Gospel always disappoints us; that is, when we expect it to regenerate the world; meaning by the world that evil thing which is the enemy of God, and never will be regenerated. The world reigns supreme in newspapers, parliaments, ministries, fashionable society, and the like, and in all of them the Gospel is suffering a daily and hourly defeat. But take into account, on the other side, the number of graces which it is bringing all the while to millions of souls living and dying in every quarter of the globe; and, as a matter of course its victories far outweigh its defeats, only for the report of them, I believe, we shall have to wait until the day of judgment.”

“That is a very solemn view of the matter,” I replied; and it seems to require in any one who labors for the good of his kind, an almost sublime degree of self-suppression and purity of intention.”

“Just so, Jack; and as very few of such poor creatures as we are have anything sublime about us, you perceive how it is we are so tempted to talk of discouragement, if the naughty world does not at once turn its swords into ploughshares at the voice of our eloquence. But now, see here, I have a drop of comfort for you, which should atone for many an effigy-burning; read that;” and he handed me a note sheet, which I guessed, as I glanced at the large childish text-hand, to be from little Edward. It ran as follows:

“DEAR COUSIN LEVEN.—Since you left us, I have had some famous rides; Oswald took me to show him Baker’s Bit, and he has had posts and chains put up. I think Florry must have told him. She hears me my Latin grammar every day, and my catechism. Two of the puppies are drowned. The other has got his eyes open; we mean to call him Toby.—Your affectionate cousin,

“EDWARD.”

“P.S.—She has asked me to write out those prayers, and I think she says them.”

“Pretty well, is not?” said Grant. “I suspect Toby is not the only individual at Exdale who is getting his eyes open. But really is it not a fine thing to see the apologist of Degg and Free Thought surrendering to Edward and the ‘Penny Catechism?’”

“Just what I should have expected,” I said. “If an archbishop in full pontificals had tried to convert her, Florry would have shown fight.”

“Well,” said Grant, “this is just a case in point. There is a row in the streets of Bradford, and all the county newspapers will be full of it, and a great many excellent persons will console with me on the disappointment. But a poor soul is rescued from a far worse abyss than Baker’s Bit, and no one will offer their congratulations, because no one will know of it; though the victory is out of all proportion greater than the defeat.”

“Thank you,” I said, “I feel very much in Toby’s case my-

self; I can only say, with Florry, I shan’t forget my lesson.”

I shall not attempt to give my reader a journal of our week at Glenleven; though the week, indeed, stretched to a fortnight, the happiest of my life. Oswald’s description of the place had been something of an exaggeration; nevertheless, there was enough of outline to make it very unlike any phase of the world with which I had hitherto been familiar. Under the shadow of the great monastery a small population had gathered, which found occupation on the land, and in the various branches of industry which had been opened by the monks. Hither Leven had transferred individuals, and occasionally families, whose suitability for the purpose he had in view, he felt reason to trust; and though he neither hoped for, nor attempted the Utopian dream with which Oswald had credited him, yet he had taken advantages of the circumstances under which the little settlement had sprung up, to establish regulations which might restrain some, at least, of the worst social abuses, under whose influences the moral atmosphere of so many an English village becomes infected. His success, partial as it was, was sufficient to impart to Glenleven what, by contrast, struck a stranger as a distinctly Christian character. The early week-day mass was heard by many on their way to work; the streets were not filled with ragged children, nor were the houses dens of filth and disorder; the attractions of the ale-house were restricted, and recreations of an innocent kind provided at suitable times. It was a costly experiment, as Leven owned, but the results were sufficient to satisfy his heart, and he did not look for more.

In company with Werner, we inspected the schools and workshops of various kinds established by the monks, including carving in wood and stone, and in these artistic pursuits Werner had gathered together some able pupils. The completion of the church and monastery, according to the perfect plan, gave ample scope for the employment of artistic genius.

“All this is education,” said Leven; “and it gives the opportunity of education. Werner, here, holds that a man must know something about an angel before he can carve one, and before he can paint the legend of a saint he must have studied it, and prayed over it. I believe he gave a course of lectures to his pupils on the nature of angels before he let them touch so much as the robe of one of those you saw in the church.”

“Quite true,” said Werner, “and only common sense: a statue is a word, and, like a word, the image of a thought. Unless a man possesses the thought, he cannot express it by the image.”

“Well, some of these lads whom you see at work here,” continued Leven, “were orphans brought up in various houses and refuges up and down the country. They may or may not succeed in becoming artists; but can it be other than a benefit to them to learn, in a practical way, with the help of their chisels, that there is a world of spirit as well as a world of matter?”

“Yes,” I said, “I can comprehend easily enough the possibility of these more cultivated pursuits expanding the intellect and admitting spiritual ideas; but it is more perplexing with the clodhoppers.”

“Taking it for granted that by clodhoppers you intend to signify the race of ploughmen and carters,” said Leven, “I admit the fact as regards the intellect, and totally deny it as regards the heart.”

“Be so good, then,” I retorted, “as to explain your machinery.”

“It is very simple,” said Leven, “and consists of two parts, one positive and the other negative: the positive is supplying them with clean, attractive, humanized homes; and the negative is the cutting off of the ale-house. Now, it must be frankly admitted, that the first of these desirable things can only be attained through the instrumentality of a wife; and, accordingly, I grant that to effect anything practical for the amendment of your clodhoppers, it is essential to keep up a supply of tidy wives. I assure you the subject has greatly exercised me; I believe that feminine slatterns have much to answer for in the sum total of social degradation. No man will spiritualize in a pigstye, and if no provision is made in the building of

cottage residences for giving a laboring man any corner to live in which is not either a pigsty or a wash-house, he must perforce take refuge in the public-house."

"You have got him on his specialty now," said Werner. "What I propose to do by my lectures to my artists, he would effect among his ploughmen by model cottages and model wives."

"But how procure the latter commodity?" I inquired with no little curiosity.

"Peace, man," said Leven. "I do not admit all to my secrets; I have correspondents among half the Rev. Mothers in England, and you have not yet seen the Glenleven schools. How long it will last it is hard to say; but as yet neither School Board nor inspectors have shown their faces at Glenleven, and we train up our boys and girls to become very tolerable Christians."

"Well," I said, "I really wonder at you. After all your fine talking about the supernatural, you profess to regenerate society, or at any rate, the clodhopping portion of it, by no higher machinery than well-ventilated cottages and smart womankind."

"I beg your pardon," he replied, "but for a lawyer you are sadly inaccurate in stating a case. Here are a set of men and women who know their religion and their duties. I simply (acting as what you once called 'the secular arm') come in to supply humanizing, and cut off brutalizing, influences. Then we expose them to the action of all that can be done in the way of instruction, encouragement, personal kindness, and assistance in time of difficulty, and leave it to the grace of God to do the rest."

By this time we had left the workshops, and found our way into the garden, where the abbot joined us. For the first time I was able to take in a general view of the pile of monastic buildings, as yet unfinished, but in course of completion, which extended before me."

"Remember," said Leven, "that they had just raised in the home they left a pile as extensive, and created a work even more fruitful."

"Yes," said the abbot, "such would seem to be the rule of monastic life. What one age creates, another overthrows, and so the seed is broadcast; and we emerge from our ruins to commence all over again. It is a perpetual exercise of the virtue of Hope."

"Well," I said, "we owe something to Bismarck; but for his Falck Laws we should never have listened on English soil to the chant as I heard it yesterday."

"You must know," said Leven, "that you have made a convert of Mr. Aubrey; he came, an unbeliever in plain chant, and departs under the spell."

The abbot smiled. "I believe it possible that we shall make as many converts by singing as by preaching," he said. "Your friend Mr. Knowles for one."

"What? does he come here to gather ideas?"

"I don't know about that," said Werner. "The first time he came it was to disseminate some of his own. He was greatly distressed at the warming apparatus in the choir, and complained of our having no carvings of fox and geese under the Miserere seats, as in old cathedrals. The abbot explained that the said carvings were not always of the most edifying description, but he said the mediæval idea suffered by their omission."

We all laughed heartily.

"Poor Knowles!" said Leven; "he must suffer before he can be real. At present he plays with the truth as children do with pretty pebbles, which they like because they shine and please the eye. The day will come when he will need a rock to stand on."

"Yes," said the abbot, "he must suffer; or," he added, in a low tone, which struck to my heart, "some one else must suffer for him; it is the only way;" and his glance rested, as he spoke, on Werner. My eye followed his, but the countenance of the young monk evinced no particular response to his words: whilst on Leven's cheek I detected a faint flush; and as I beheld it, I asked myself what it might indicate. By one of those

interior instincts which go beyond the knowledge we acquire by the senses, I seemed to understand that these three men knew more of one another than appeared on the surface, and I wondered that I had never wondered before, who Werner was, and what had been the history of that strong tie which had linked him with my friend, before he entered the cloister. I resolved to penetrate the mystery; and as Leven and I took leave of our hosts, and bent our steps homeward, my thoughts were busy how best to approach the subject. My readers will probably ere this have discovered that I am a poor diplomatist. I have acted on mathematical principle that the shortest line between two given points is a right line; nor has my ingenuity ever hit on any method of attack superior to a straightforward question. So, as we sat together in the summer twilight, the hour when it becomes so easy to ask and answer questions from which we would shrink under the sun of noon-day, I opened the trenches with the sudden question: "Who is Werner, Grant, and how did you first know him?"

Grant, for so I like to call him, appeared to brace himself to sustain the cross-examination with severe indifference.

"Werner is a German; his mother is Baroness Werner, a Bavarian; I made his acquaintance when I went out there for a month or two, the year after you left England. We got to be great friends; he is an excellent fellow."

"I wonder what the abbot *meant* by what he said."

"About the plain chant, you mean?"

"No, I don't mean. I mean about Knowles and the suffering."

"Well, I suppose a fellow must suffer before he takes to things in earnest."

"Yes, but about others suffering for him."

"Well?"

"Well, what did he mean?"

"How can I say? I suppose he considered Anglicanism a kind of demon that could be cast out only by prayer and fasting."

A pause.

"Has Werner ever had such a demon?" I asked. It was a bow drawn at a venture, but it hit the mark. It was impossible for Grant to conceal the deep emotion which my words called forth, and I felt there was nothing left for it but to apologize for unintentionally touching on a tender chord, which I did as awkwardly as possible. At last he said:

"I know, Jack, you have often been puzzled at me, and perhaps, in your heart have thought many thoughts."

"What thoughts?"

"Well, that I exaggerate, that I am taking a wrong bent about it all, following a whimsical fancy; and perhaps it has come to you to conceive the possibility of there being a something to explain it all. Well, there is, or was—in short, Werner's history is a chapter in my own."

"My dear Grant, I have no right to ask you, but can you tell it me?"

He smiled; and, after a minute or two, settling himself so that as he spoke his eyes could rest on the hills and the evening sky, and not on my countenance, he began.

CHAPTER XIV.

WERNER'S STORY.

"I WENT abroad the year after you left England. You know pretty well what I thought about things at that time. I *had* thought a good deal about money and society, and one's duty about such things, and how one could obey the Gospel, obey it to the letter I mean; but Jack, I had thought of these things as a poor man, and not as a rich man. When the wealth came, it was enormous. I felt the weight and the responsibility, and I tried to fix my principles, and be true to them; and the shape they took was something in this way: almsdeeds, encouragement of all undertakings to improve the laboring classes, founding of religious works, creation of a great circle of usefulness and edification, and myself in the centre of it. Pictures even of that family life we once talked of, sometimes

looked in. I had thought for myself all you have thought for me, that to have weight, influence, character, a man must be at the head of a grand Christian household. Political greatness, too came in, and a dozen other fancies—you couldn't believe how many. Occasionally, whilst all these things were singing in my ears, a voice would whisper for a moment, that there was another way, a better way. Father Henry's words about riches, and giving one's life for the brethren—I can't describe it exactly, but it seemed like two things struggling in my heart—*Usefulness and a great career, without much sacrifice*, and the passing call (temptation, as I tried to think it) to forsake and abandon everything.

"I went abroad with the express purpose of seeing for myself what Catholic life in Catholic countries was, to study the reality of a Catholic nobleman's household, in the country where something of the great baronial influence still lingers—the Catholic States of Germany. Of course I had introductions and all that sort of thing, and it was so I first made acquaintance with Werner's family. His father holds a half a dozen forests and provinces—It was just what I wanted to see; his mother, the Baroness Werner, was a real old Christian—a sort of St. Elizabeth of Hungary—a famous woman. Just what your mother would be, Jack, if she was a Catholic and a German baroness. Franz Werner was her youngest son. A woman's youngest son is pretty sure to be her idol, and if he is her idol, he is her cross. She loved him as only mothers love their sons, and how could she help it? He was so gay, and gallant, aye, you may smile, but ten years ago that pale shaven monk was the handsomest fellow in all Bavaria. So clever, too, an artist, by intuition, only he never cared to touch a brush save for half an hour's idleness, and with a voice like an angel singing his own songs to his own improvised music, and a poet—(I'm a practical man myself, but I know what a charm it is to feel that gift in others)—and a rattling, merry bewitching companion, too; spoilt, of course, and equally, of course, with more than a dash of selfishness; but I could not help it, nor you couldn't, nor any body—it was impossible not to love him.

"He was the idol of his mother, and—her cross. He had the faith, oh! dear yes. Why, he volunteered into the Zouaves, and fought like a hero at Castelfidardo; was wounded there, and wrote to his mother, in raptures at the privilege of shedding his blood for the good cause; aye, and he meant it, too; but you know faith without works is dead, and in some respects Franz was very much of a Lutheran. I need not tell you what sort of scrapes his were; rather sad ones, some of them; but, then, he was so winning in his repentance, she always forgave him; and you could not but feel that had he been less charming, less engaging than he was, it would have been a happier thing for the poor boy.

"It was about a year after I had returned to England that I received a letter from the baroness, written in great grief. Franz was at Florence, had been there for months; he was well received at court, in all the gay circles of the gayest of capitals, and though often recalled by his father, he continued to linger and defer his return, and make excuses; in short they felt there was something wrong. Then she had privately inquired; and the long and short of it was, he was taken in a crafty snare. In certain circles abroad, just now, men fish for one another's souls to give them to the enemy. They use all baits, and not a few are caught and delivered over to perdition. The Marchese Zingari was just then a leading man among the Italian Liberals. It was a great object with his party to win over German proselytes, and so swell their German connection. Werner was worth the trouble of entrapping, and they played the game with cunning skill. The Marchesa was a bewitching woman, ten years his senior, and, on that very account, more dangerous. It was also safe, what could the world find to say against it? There was art and music, and flattery and beauty. An atmosphere too, such as even to us, dull Anglo-Saxons, is a kind of new existence, but which, to a poet like him, is inspiration, intoxication. They took him on his weak side, fired his imagination, and quietly sapped his moral strength. A little more, and only a little more, would be wanted to plunge

him into some fatal step which would for ever destroy his self-respect, and sense of honor, and which would deliver him up bound and captive into the hands of those political Beelzebubs."

"Strong language, Grant."

"Not a bit too strong; why, I'm diluting the horrible story down to the strength which Christian ears can bear to listen to; but the thing goes on every day, in hundreds and thousands. The mother wrote all this; she had found it out; she hesitated to tell her husband, lest he should be betrayed into some violent, indiscreet act, which would forever cut off the hope of reclaiming the boy. So she wrote to me, to me '*who loved him so*,' those were her words: 'would I not pity him, and if possible, try to save him?' I read the words, and they burnt deep into my heart. Did I *not* love him! Yes, indeed; I did not stop to ask why he was (and is) so dear to me; but it was a love 'passing the love of woman.' I did not stop to think what I should do, or could do to save him, but the next day I started for Florence.

"It is a good thing to find one's self a duke sometimes, Jack; makes it wonderfully easy to get into places where one has a mind to go. As Duke of Leven, I had no difficulty in entering the charmed circle of Florence society. People were glad to invite, and make much of the rich Inglesse, and Werner and I soon met face to face. Oh! how his face was changed! What a stamp of evil was there? Not evil perfected, consummated past the hope of recall; but I thought I saw the claw of the enemy on him—loss of grace, loss of peace, of innocence. Yet I loved him as I ever did; one cannot, somehow, change. Of course he welcomed me; but he was always too busy to find time to give me a morning to myself. When we met, it was always in the company of others, the most charming people in the world, no doubt; but what did I care for charming people, when what I wanted was *his soul*?

"At last, one evening—it was in the gallery of the Pitti palace—I seized on him, and held him fast. 'Werner,' I said, 'what are you about? Where are you going? Who are all these people among whom I find you?'

"'People? What people?'

"'Why, these Zingari?'

"'Who are they? Why, my friends. Is not that enough for you?' he said fiercely.

"'Friends!' I said bitterly. 'I thought *I* was your friend?'

"'Well, and what of that? I really don't understand you, Leven; don't keep me here; I must be going.'

"'You shall not go,' I said. 'You are deceived, bewitched, ensnared; that Zingari is a scoundrel; and as to the Marchesa—'

"'Say one word more, and you will repent it,' he answered. 'I can forgive you your folly as regards myself, but I will hear nothing that can touch the honor of a lady.'"

"I cannot repeat it all—my passionate appeals, his fierce rejection. At last he tore himself away from me in anger, and with a sick heart I left the gallery and the palace, and hardly knowing what I did, I found myself in the street, and walked on awhile, not caring whither I went my brain and heart in a fever. Yes, he was under a charm, a spell; I could not reach him, I could not save him. What misery! I saw an open door before me, and entered it; it was the Church of Sta. Maria Novella; such a change from the busy streets to find one's self in the dark, quiet church, only lighted by the lamps which hung before every altar, and were reflected on the marble floor as though in water. I knelt before the first altar I came to; and resting my fevered forehead on the marble balustrade, I shed bitter tears. Why did I love him so, and what was it I loved? *His soul!* that soul, the innate beauty of which had been revealed to me at our first meeting. Clouded over, and bespotted with many a stain, there it still was, a beautiful, a glorious soul, most dear to God, most dear to my heart, and, as I felt too surely, in the grasp of the Enemy.

"What could I do? With that one thought in my mind I raised my eyes, and they fell on a figure. If you know Italian

churches, you must remember a certain image, not uncommon in some of them, representing our Lord crowned with thorns, and with his hands bound, as Pilate presented Him to the people. It is generally called *Gesù Nazareno*. Some of those figures are marvellously devotional, with soft, weary eyes that look kindly and pitifully on the worshipper. Such was the one on which I gazed. I met those Eyes, and they seemed to fix on mine. I repeated my words, speaking now as if in prayer: 'O Lord, what can I do?' Now, Aubrey, I don't mean to say that I saw or heard anything—don't think it; but *in my heart* I did hear a word, and in that Face I saw the thing it meant: 'Sacrifice.'

"Sacrifice?—What?—'All.'—What, *all*?—How? Then I began to think, and as it were, to listen. I listened to the voice within me, and this was what it said: 'You are not true to yourself. You have been seeking to strike a clever balance between God and the world—to satisfy your conscience and your high aspirations by doing good works, and to please yourself by doing them in a way that should cost you as little as possible. Hypocrite! choose between God and mammon. Let it be all God, or all mammon. You want to make a great name, to lead the Catholic body, to lead the country, to restore the prestige of your family, to be the Great Duke as well as the New Duke. You think you are indifferent to things like these, and you are *not* indifferent. You think the world has no hold on you, and its hold is tightening day by day. There is but one remedy—*Sacrifice*. And if you would save this soul, it is by *Sacrifice* you must save it. Give all for all, 'Sell all and give to the poor,' give *ALL*. Wealth, reputation, ease, time, pleasure, freedom, lay them all down, renounce them, abjure them, and forever!'

"I hardly knew what it was, I felt myself so powerfully urged to do, save that it was an absolute surrender of everything to which I could cling on the side of nature—if by such an act I could win the soul that was hanging in such a terrible peril. Nor could I hesitate, my heart answered for me: it accepted all, it sacrificed all; and taking out the little brass crucifix, which my father had held on his death-bed, and which has never left me, I promised, with all the earnestness of my soul, to *give it all*. Then there came a moment of profound interior stillness; I felt my offering had been accepted.

"I can tell you but little of the next two days. I saw and heard nothing of Werner; but on the evening of the second day I went to a reception at the English Embassy. It could not be helped. Every English visitor of distinction was there, and a good many foreigners. There was a great crowd; and as I was making my way among the uniforms and ladies' trains, thinking in my soul what disgusting trash it all was, I saw coming to meet me some familiar faces. There are some people, Jack, whom you are sure to meet everywhere. On the top of the Righi, at an English archery meeting, at the upper cataracts of the Nile, there they are, as sure as life, and to this class belong the Exboroughs. There she was, 'Lady Ex,' on the arm of Count Gallipot, the Hungarian Chargé d'Affaires, and Lady Florinda, under escort of Mr. Eustace de Something or other, a young diplomat of 'rising expectations.'"

"I say, Grant, you're getting rather fierce—are you sure of the names?"

"Well, if it wasn't Gallipot, it was something like it; you know what I mean. No help for it. We met, and then followed recognitions, and exclamations of surprise, and delight, and regret that we hadn't met before, only the Exes had been to the Baths of Carrara, for the last fortnight, and were only just back, and hadn't heard of my arrival. 'And had I heard Beppo, the new tenor? Then I positively must, there was nothing like him. And oh! how shockingly dreadful about poor Mr. Werner, wasn't it? Such a delightful person. Really, I'm immensely sorry.' 'What about Werner?' I said, choking. 'Haven't you heard?' He's dead of the black fever; so very sudden, too.' 'Dead?' 'Yes; didn't we hear Mr. Werner was dead, mamma?' said Lady Florinda. 'No, my dear, but I think he was dying: such a *great* favorite of mine, you know; quite a loss he'll be at Florence,' and on they swept.

"*Werner dead or dying!* Perhaps that was the answer to my prayer. Perhaps death would save him. But his *soul*? How was it with him? I could not bear the suspense; but getting free as soon as I could from the crowd, I left the house and drove straight to Werner's lodgings.

"It was all true. The very evening we had parted he had sickened of the terrible fever; far worse than typhus, a deadly thing; every one had fled the house in terror, except his faithful German servant, who had got a couple of Sisters of Charity to nurse him; and so I found him senseless, delirious, and as they told me, without hope of recovery. Had he seen a priest? Oh, yes, the parish priest had seen him, and anointed him; that was all that could be done; not a moment of reason for confession, and the end close at hand.

"I stayed by him that night; his incoherent words went to my heart; I gathered little comfort from them, it was all such wild talk, as though coming from a heart and brain that were ill at ease. And then even those words ceased, and there was stupor, unconsciousness. They told me this was the last stage, and he would never rouse again. But he did. On the fourth day, he opened his eyes, and murmured something; I thought he knew me, but could not be sure; but anyhow, the crisis was past, and he was alive—weak and shattered to pieces, but *alive*, and, as I thought, with reason unimpaired. That was all I could guess.

"Gradually he gained strength enough for me to move him out to Fiesole. I took him to a villa there, hoping that the sweet fresh air and quiet would restore him. And it did. He gained strength, and was himself, and yet not like his former self—so still and silent. As soon as he could speak coherently, he asked for a priest, and saw him several times. I knew no more, of course, except that afterwards, as I sat beside him, he stretched out his hand and took mine, and squeezed it silently. At last one day he said: 'I wish I could see my mother!' Then I knew it was all right with him, and I telegraphed for the baroness.

"And the Zingaris, what of them?"

"Oh! the black fever kept *them* off," said Grant, rather grimly. The baroness came, and Werner and she were like a mother and her baby. I *knew* nothing of what passed in his soul, but I felt it was all right: he was safe. My sacrifice had been accepted.

"What was best to be done?" He longed to get away from the place, to forget all that had beset him there. I proposed to take him with me to England, and his mother eagerly accepted the proposal, for she felt she could trust him in my hands. So, by slow stages, we travelled home to Oakham, and there he stayed. By degrees he regained health and vigor; not the old vigor or the old spirit; something had gone out of him—a good deal of the animal, I think—but it had left behind all his gifts of heart and mind, and imagination, deepened and vivified with a new life and sense. I knew not (and only imperfectly, and by degrees, did he let me know) all that had passed in his soul during those seemingly unconscious hours. Once he said: 'It is an awful thing to hang over an abyss, suspended by a single thread!'

"You were very near the end," I said.

"The end! I was not thinking of that; there was another abyss before that."

"I saw what he was thinking of; some tremendous false step to which he was hastening, when that blow from God struck him down and saved him. And in his long stupor he had seen and understood it all.

"So Werner and I were domesticated together at Oakham. It was then I began to discover the true worth of the soul I had saved—a soul, Jack, as far above my own in worth and beauty as those heavens are above the tree-tops. Most dear to God—no wonder! And now that it had waked to its true life, what floods of tenderness, what flights of lofty beauty—what a power, a strength, a keenness of spiritual insight! It was a happy month or two. It was then that he painted St. Alexis, and that we smashed the heathen deities.

"But there was a question for me to decide, and I could not

delay it. *I had promised*: how was I to fulfil? I did not see my way. The idea that oftenest came before me was to make over my whole possessions to charitable and religious purposes at a dash, retaining £5,000, and with that, return to Australia, and begin life over again as William Grant. The monks had come to England about a year before, and had begun their settlement at Glenleven. Werner took a deep interest in it all, and his art was always at their service; and I liked the abbot, who is a fine fellow, Jack, and I determined to put the whole case before him. He asked for time; nine days, during which they had a novena of masses; at its close he sent for me, and I prepared to hear his decision as to my fate.

"No, what I had thought of would not do; there were other and better ways than that of 'selling all.' He drew a plan and showed me how I might retain the stewardship of this enormous property, and administer it as a trust, retaining all the burden, the work and the responsibility, doing the best for the souls and bodies of others; giving not my money alone, but my life. 'You vowed away not merely *possessions*,' he said, 'but life, freedom, time, ease, reputation. In Australia you will simply have shifted the heavy weight from your shoulders once for all. What God designs for you is a more complete sacrifice, and one which the world will never guess, leaving you externally as you are, but demanding every moment and every faculty of your entire being!'

"There is no need, my dear Aubrey, to say more about it, than that I comprehended it all, and saw what was asked of me. So it was settled."

I took his hand. "I see all about it, Grant; I understand."

"Ah! but you haven't seen it all just yet," he said. "That cost me nothing. It has cost plenty to do it, because, you see, such a life grinds a fellow to powder. But it was not *the* sacrifice."

"What was, then?"

"Well, I'll tell you. We set to work, Werner and I. He helped me in everything; he knew nothing of my secret reasons, or my vow, or what had moved me to it; but he understood that I wanted to realize that word in the Gospel, and he entered into the thought, and determined to help me in it. So, for a year we worked together: he was my second self; so full of thoughts, better, truer, more practical thoughts than my own; so full of ardor and unction, lifting up my heavy English lumpishness, and keeping it at the mark. Well, Jack, the day came when he told me he had something to say to me. I had seen a something—not a *cloud*, but a something on his brow. You can guess what it was. His call had come, and he must leave me. I had nothing to say, for had I not promised *ALL*? What right had I to say to God, '*not this*,' 'everything but *this*?' You know I could not say that; and I thank God I did not. I gave him up, and he went away to Glenleven: but *that* was the real sacrifice."

The simplicity of the words touched me, and I think there was little more spoken between us that evening. I saw it all now clearly; the grandeur of my friend's character, the completeness of his sacrifice; it was not the result of whim or theory, but the outcome of *one act*, an act by which he had voluntarily given all *all* to save a soul; and God had accepted the gift. What more was yet to come? what would be the end of a life so true to the word which had given it the first impulse? That yet remained for me to see.

CHAPTER XV.

DUO IN ALTUM.

THE day was drawing near for us to leave Glenleven, and I beheld its approach with real regret. There was a charm of beauty, material and spiritual, which hung about the place, increased to my heart by the deeper knowledge and appreciation which I had gained there of the real character of my friend.

His simplicity, and his off-hand school-boy talk had veiled the sublimity of what lay beneath; and though I always felt that he was a noble soul, unsoiled by the touch and breath of the world, I had accustomed myself to regard what I did not understand as a sort of regrettable eccentricity. I knew better now and alone among the hills, or by the rocks by the river side, or sitting at the window of his little study looking out into his simple garden, that great loving soul revealed itself to me in truth; always true to its one idea of serving God and man in the spirit of self-sacrifice, yet always seeking to conceal itself, and to do its greatest deeds in the simplest fashion, and clothed its noblest sentiments in the plainest words.

The last day came, and the last Mass, and the last Vesper under that noble roof; and the last grand tones of the chant carrying the words of Holy Writ home to the centre of my heart. It was Sunday, the Fourth Sunday after Pentecost (for give my dwelling on these little details, dear reader, they are so graven on my memory), and the Sunday Gospel was that which relates the story of the miraculous draught of fishes on the Tiberian Lake. "*Duc in altum!*"—"Launch into the deep." Who has ever heard those words without their waking a sense of dread, of hope, or of aspiration within his soul?

When it was time to leave the church, Grant still lingered. I waited and watched, but I did not seek to hurry him. He knelt before the high altar long and wistfully; then paid a visit to the shrine of the Martyr; and last of all, entered the chapel in the opposite transept, and prayed beside the tomb. At last he rose and came away, and we left the church.

"*Duc in altum!* What words!" he said. "They knew not why or where—to launch into the *deep*—such a bold, fearless word it sounds! Such a call to trust in the dark!"

"Now, Grant, what are you thinking of?"

"I don't know; only it seems to me as if every to-morrow was a great mystery, and every morning we have need of courage to launch into its depths."

"I know the to-morrow that is waiting for me is a very disagreeable mystery; to exchange Glenleven for the express train for London is enough to gain the merit of martyrdom."

"Well, why do you go?"

"Because I must; the inevitable, Grant, is a mighty master."

"Anyhow, we shall travel together as far as Bradford, and you shall spend one day with me there."

"To Bradford!" I exclaimed. "You don't mean to say you are going back to that place?"

"Ah! you're thinking of the effigy; why, that was a fortnight ago, and they've forgotten all about it by this time; and if they had not, it would only be a better reason for my showing myself. I presume you would not wish me to leave the field to Degg? But the fact is, I have business there which presses. I am to meet one of your London scientific friends, Professor Drybones. He is coming down about the ventilation affair, and I have to see if our plans on that matter can be perfected."

"He said some very civil things about your notions on the head when I saw him in Edwards'."

"Well, you shall judge for yourself; mine-ventilation was always a hobby of mine own, and there is fine scope for indulging it at Bradford."

The early train on Monday morning bore me away from the hills and valleys of Glenleven, from the gray minster, and the clear river bubbling among its rocks, and the granite peaks among quiet woods among which I had spent a fortnight so rich in bright and ennobling thoughts that it seemed to me as if I had been out of the busy world for a twelvemonth. An hour or two brought us to the smoke and ashpits of Bradford; and the spell was rudely broken. Grant twitted me a little on my repulsive mood, and my reluctance to return to common life, and took me to the house of his engineer, telling me it was an excellent school for curing a man of day-dreams. He was so busy with plans and sections, and I could not but marvel at the versatility of his mind, which could so easily turn from subjects of profoundest interior interest to the practical details of machinery and ventilation. He spoke like a man who und

and what he was talking about, and evidently enjoyed the endless explanation of doors, and double shafts, and weight of atmosphere that sounded in my ears like a Shibboleth.

"Drybones will be here to-morrow," said Grant, at last; and before he comes I shall have an examination of the Hen and Chickens myself."

"The Hen and Chickens!"

"Yes, my dear sir, we name our mines hereabouts, and this particular mine rejoices in that name, owing to the multitude of cuttings proceeding from the main shaft. It was once considered the most dangerous mine of the district, but we have tried this plan of double shaft ventilation, and have redeemed its reputation. I think we shall teach Drybones a thing or two."

"How far is it from here?"

"About two miles, and the horses are at the door; so before turning to civilized life come and take your first lesson in mine engineering."

We mounted and rode off, and on the road he explained to me the system of ventilation which had been introduced into this particular mine, of which I retain only the general recollection that the air was admitted by one shaft and forced through the mine, leaving it by another; that these two shafts were at a considerable distance one from the other, and that the workings in the mine were, furthermore, divided into different compartments, or "panels," as they were called, isolated one from another by certain strong doors, the object being, in case of an accident occurring in one of them, to prevent its extending to the others. But the most important system of doors was at what he called the "Little Shaft," in a part of the mine which, for one cause or another, most often generated the bad air. It was the business for one gang of men to open these doors at certain hours and close them at others, according to the part of the mine in which the workings happened to be going on; and by a careful attention to the system and regulations he had devised, all accidents had now, for a considerable time, been prevented.

"The shaft we are going to inspect first of all," he continued, "is the great shaft; the little one is a mile and a half away on the other side of the hill; but Dymock, the engineer, tells me that the men are at work on this side, and I am anxious to ascertain if the whole thing is in order before Drybones begins his visitation to-morrow."

We reached what Grant had called "the Great Shaft." I am not a professor, dear reader, and can only explain this much, that when a mine is ventilated by two shafts, one shaft necessarily longer and deeper than the other, and the weight of the air column, therefore, heavier than at the shorter shaft, causes the air to be forced in at the long shaft and out at the short one; and entering pure and wholesome, the air travels through the mine, issuing forth at the further end clogged with noxious gases. The "Great Shaft," then, was the one where the air was forced in. Grant inspected the machinery, received a number of details from the overseer in attendance, and was informed that one hundred and eighty men were actually at work on the northern side of the mine. The "Little Shaft" was on the southern side, and no miners were at work on that side; but a certain number of men were on duty were attending to the doors, for the purpose of ventilation.

Grant proposed a walk to the Little Shaft, leaving our horses under the care of the overseer; and we set out, climbing the hill (very different in its aspect from the heathy moors of Glenver), and descending on the other side to a spot where a few sheds, some machinery, and a signal house, with a telegraph communicating with the works at the other side, indicated the locality we were in quest of.

But where were the men? Not one was visible. "In the shaft, I suppose," said Grant, a supposition quickly dispelled by approaching the mouth of the aperture, which displayed the necessary arrangements for descending it, prepared and ready for use; no one, it was evident, had as yet gone down. Grant looked thoughtful, not to say perplexed. Presently he caught sight of a shock of hair and a ragged jacket in one of the sheds,

and advancing to the spot, laid hands on a wild-looking boy, who seemed to shun observation.

"Hallo! whom have we here? Who are you, my lad?"

No answer.

"Where are the men on duty?"

"I doant know."

"Are they in the shaft?"

"Doant know, tell 'ee."

"Now, my lad, see here," said Grant. "The overseer will be here in an hour, and if he finds no one here but you, and you refuse to answer his questions, it will be the worse for you. Come, none of that," as the creature tried to free itself from the strong grasp; "you'll stay where you are; and if you don't want all the bones in your body broken when the overseer comes, think better of it, and tell me where Jones and the other fellow are at this moment."

The boy scratched his head, and fidgetted about in sore distress for a minute or so, and then came out the reply: "Well, I guess they're at the 'Feathers.'"

"The Feathers!"

"Aye, the public. Jones is father to I, and he bid we wait. I be Tim Jones."

Grant gave a groan. The little public house on the road to Bradford, rejoicing in the sign of the Prince of Wales' Feathers, had proved too strong in its attractions for the guardians of the Little Shaft. After a moment's silence he resumed his interrogatory. "See here," he said, "you'll just run off to the Feathers, and tell your father the Duke of Leven is waiting for him here. Now be sharp."

And leaving hold of his collar, Tim darted off down the hill, and disappeared in the road.

"Isn't it enough to break a man's heart?" said Grant. "Turn where you will, do what you will, always confronted with the country's evil genius, the curse of drink." And he paced to and fro with an air of deep pre-occupation. In a few minutes Tim returned in company with a big man, who, judging by his appearance, was not the better for his sojourn at the Feathers. He surveyed the Duke with an air of stupid amazement, and in reply to his questions gave an incoherent answer which too plainly betrayed the fact that the visit to the ale house had not been a brief or passing one. Grant turned to the boy. "Is this your father?"

"Noa."

"Then where is he, and why didn't you bring him?"

Then came the fatal reply: "Father's drunk." Yes, it was so; Jones, the responsible guardian and doorkeeper was drunk, his companion little better; and the small amount of sense retained by the latter was of little purpose, for he was not the responsible man in charge of the shaft; and by himself, even had he been sober, could not have been trusted to do the necessary duty. After painful questioning we at last gathered the alarming fact, that the shaft had not been entered nor the ventilation doors attended to that morning; that Jones, the only man of the two who understood the business, was past all efforts to recall him to consciousness, and that his comrade was capable only of working the machinery by which the bucket was lowered into and raised out of the shaft. Of the doors and management he knew nothing.

The situation was serious: Grant looked at his watch. "How long were we coming from the Great Shaft?"

"Three quarters of an hour or thereabouts."

"And this fellow would get over the ground in half an hour. Well, we must try what can be done." He tore a leaf from his pocket-book, and wrote the following words: "The two men drunk; doors unopened. Signal all the men out of the mine. Send us a gang at once to see to things here."—LEVEN.

Folding it up, and directing it to the overseer, he gave it to the boy, with half-a-crown, and bade him run for his life with it to the Great Shaft. "If you are quick and faithful, you shall have the same sum when you return; now lose no time, but be off." The boy grinned at sight of the silver, and set off at a round pace.

I only imperfectly apprehended the state of things, but I

saw that Grant kept an anxious look-out on the road to detect the first appearance of the relief party. But half an hour passed, and no one yet appeared.

"The boy is frightened," he said, "and has made off. Well, there is only one other chance. Here, you fellow," addressing the man, who by this time was partially sobered, "can you trust yourself to handle the winch, and lower the bucket?"

"Aye, sure, but who'll be going down?"

"I shall," said the Duke, firmly; and in another moment he had entered the bucket; and seizing the chain, gave the signal to lower away.

"Grant!" I exclaimed, "don't be so mad; why the fellows will be here in a moment; what can you do?"

"Leave go, Jack, it's all right; I must see to those doors."

"Is there danger, then?"

"To the hundred and eighty men on the other side of the pit there is, if they are not out of the mine."

"Let me go!"

"Stuff! What could you do? You don't know a door from a donkey."

"But you?"

"I could find my way blindfolded. Why, Jack, I have planned the whole business; I've been in and out here a dozen times at least."

I implored, but all in vain; he gave the signal, and the man lowered the winch: Grant nodded to me with his bright, frank, fearless look, "All right, Jack: say a Hail Mary," and he was out of sight.

I tried to still my fears—fears of what? After all, I knew not. I paced up and down, whether for hours or minutes I could not tell. At last, looking towards the hill, I caught the welcome sight of a dozen men descending the road towards the shaft. I waved my hat to urge them quicker, and in my impatience set out to meet them. We were nearing together when there was a low sound, as it were, far beneath my feet, a slight trembling of the earth, and a cry from the men. I sprang forward, crying, "The Duke! the Duke!"

"Where?" said the overseer, who led the party.

"In the shaft—alone."

"Then God rest his soul!" he exclaimed; "that was an explosion."

* * * * *

We hastened to the shaft, and whilst some telegraphed for more aid, others prepared to clear the shaft and descend without loss of time. Before long the whole gang were on the spot: for Leven's message to signal the men out of the mine had cleared the workings and saved the men from the danger. They were all there, the hundred and eighty men he had so nobly saved; many of whom a short week before had been burning him in effigy. And as the rumor of the accident spread, and women and children came hurrying in dismay to the pit's mouth, loud were the expressions of joy and thankfulness to find fathers, sons, husbands, all safe and sound. But how was it with Leven?

An hour or two of work sufficed to answer that question. The shaft was cleared, and when the working party who had volunteered to explore came to the surface, they bore him with them, and laid him on the grass, and in another moment I was kneeling beside him.

Yes, he was dead. Not a mark of exterior injury. The breath of the fire had not touched him. A sweet smile on his face, a smile of inexpressible peace, but life had been extinct at least an hour. The cause of his death was not the actual combustion, but what miners call the "after-damp," that is, the mixture of bad gases caused by the explosion, and resulting in suffocation.

They laid him in one of the sheds, and we telegraphed to Glenleven and Oakham.

I do not stop here to speak of my own feelings, or those of the men around me. Some sensations are not keenly felt from their very intensity. This blow had come with a shock which, for the time, stunned me. I could act, and speak, and move, and give orders, but at first I could not think. Only gradually

did the truth, the whole truth, break on me and deluge me with anguish; and I understood that a noble life had been consumed by a death of sacrifice, and that in very deed and truth he had given his life for his brethren.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE END.

We carried him to Oakham. He was so completely the life of his family that we should have been perplexed as to what to do if he had died. The direction of affairs had it not been for his secretary, Mr. Dymock, who placed in my hands a sealed packet which had been given into his keeping by the Duke the evening before he had last left Oakham. It was directed to myself, I opened it, and found his will, drawn up and signed with unusual formalities, and a brief document declaring Sir John Dymock, myself, and Oswald, his trustees and executors, and myself sole guardian of Edward Wigram, his heir.

This sufficed to enable us to act; and as we knew that he had already fixed on Glenleven as the place of his interment, in consequence of what had happened had already been sent to the monastery; and on our arrival at Oakham we found the abbot, Werner, and some others of the monks waiting to receive us.

Werner and the other brethren gently and reverently prepared him for his last rest, and then it was we came to know that not care nor toils alone had done the work of age, but that he, who had sacrificed his life to charity, had also been used to offer his body to God by the longer and more lingering sacrifice of penance. There were the rough hair shirt, and the chain, and the sharp crucifix. I beheld it all, and then, when I recalled the frank, joyous voice, and inartificial manner, I marvelled at the power of self-repression, the exquisite gentility with which he had hidden from curious eyes every trace of his higher gifts of sanctity.

Until all was ready for his removal to Glenleven, we kept him in the little chapel, before the golden tabernacle, and there, hour after hour, we watched beside him whilst the country was crowded in from all portions of the country round all whom he had served, and helped, and ministered to, young and old, Catholics and Protestants, gentle and simple, to look on him and pray beside him, and take their last farewell.

But there was one who came and would not go away; he knelt there like one who had been smitten to the heart with something more than sorrow. It was Wilfrid Knowles, who in the closing scene of that beautiful life, received the light of faith in his soul, and awoke to reality. The abbot's words regarding him had been an unconscious prophecy; he had been won by the suffering, not of himself, but of another.

I shall only touch on the last scene of all: the gorgeous ceremonial which bore to his resting-place the last Duke of Leven, followed by half the country, by all his tenantry, and by the colliers whom he had died to save, and who walked in the long procession, praying for, and blessing their benefactor. I will say nothing of all that, and of the bitter tears we shed as we laid him at the feet of his father, and felt that one so noble had gone out from among us who belonged to a higher sphere than that of men of a common mould.

We read his will; and all were startled and amazed to find that there was little left to dispose of. Oakham Park, and a modest estate attached to it, were devised to Edward Wigram, and certain other lands and properties were left to be administered in trust for the maintenance of hospitals, schools, and other charitable institutions he had founded; but the vast wealth he had once possessed had all but disappeared, and of his Australian millions there remained not a farthing.

The news spread about, and gradually the truth came to be understood. The Duke, the greatest millionaire of England, had died worth comparatively nothing, because he had been steadily carrying out the purpose of his life to obey the precept of the Gospel: "to sell all, and give to the poor, and follow Christ." The truth, when known, produced a powerful impression, especially among his own young men at Oakham.

many of whom followed the example of Knowles, and embraced the faith. The domestic chapel soon became insufficient for the wants of the Oakham congregation; and gladly recognizing the opportunity thus given me of carrying out one of Leven's dearest wishes, I resolved to dedicate a portion of my own wealth to the erection of a church.

I chose a spot close to that part of the plantation where, years before, he had held me over the precipice and saved my life. There the new parish church of Oakham has arisen, dedicated to St. Alexis, and designed by Werner, who watched over every detail with loving eyes. It is my monument to the memory of my friend, and a thank-offering for that friendship which I number among the choicest graces of a not unhappy life.

In the completion of this undertaking I have been not a little assisted by the ardor of one whose story I have as yet left incomplete. The Duke's death hastened the work which the influence of his words and character had commenced in the heart of Florence Oswald. She was received into the Church within the same year, and my readers will not probably be greatly astonished to hear that two years later she became my wife. She shares with me the care of my little ward, to whom, as she often says, she owes, in no small degree, the gift of faith. And I think, if there be a desire in both our hearts, it is so to train him that in after years he may worthily fulfil the trust committed to him, and realize our dear Grant's ideal of "the Christian family."

THE END.



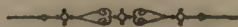
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THE VISION

OF

OLD ANDREW THE WEAVER.



AN unassuming little village is B—, in one of the Midland counties of England, seldom visited by travelers, as being out of the line of the greater thoroughfares, and possessing no feature of interest beyond the simple beauty of its fields and orchards. At present it consists merely of a few detached clusters of neatly thatched cottages, each seeming to repose amid the foliage of a luxuriant mass of fruit trees: and grouped, without any regard to order, around the lower slopes of a gentle hill, from the tops of which the taper spire of its good old church scars high aloft, as if protecting, at once, and asserting its authority over the abodes of its children there below.

The size and beauty of this relic of times gone by, seems to indicate that at one period a much more numerous and wealthy population must have been gathered around it than at present; and the same is evident from the extent of the churchyard, and the many grass-grown mounds scattered through the meadows, well known to be composed of the debris of masonry.

In fact, not so long since as that the existing generation had lost the tradition of its prosperity, B— had seen far better days than it could hope for again. Ere the revolutions of trade and the rapid perfection of machinery had concentrated manufactures in the large towns, a thriving fabric of linen cloth had furnished employment and happiness to its cottagers. And there was one yet remaining amongst them who could himself remember these better times, when from the church-crowned hill, from beneath the green lime trees that belted the grave-yard, it was pleasant to look down on the fields around, here blooming with the azure blossom of the flax, there glistening with the new-made cloth, spread forth in strips of dazzling whiteness, to bleach in the sun's rays; and to listen to the shock of the loom and the rattle of the shuttle, and the gay songs that came forth from the wide-open door of every cottage.

Old Andrew, the weaver, could well recollect those days and scenes; for, amidst that blithe and contented generation, he had been the blithest. But he had seen the looms, one by one, grow idle; and his companions, one by one, go forth to seek their fortunes elsewhere; or, one by one, carried up the hill to their beds beneath the old lime trees, and now he was the sole remaining relic of those so happy times.

Yet he still clung to his loom, though year by year the importations of cheap machine-made linen kept diminishing the demand for his craft; he still tried to carol forth his old favorite ditties, though his voice was growing thin and rough with age—aye, and it must be said, with sorrow; and he loved to tell of the days when he was the first among the boys at football and the race, and the most admired, and the most favored, too, at the dance on the green on the summer evenings; but then, sometimes, the tear would steal down his cheeks whilst he was speaking, or he would break off suddenly in his tale, and hasten back to his once smiling but now desolate cottage, murmuring to himself, "It's all over now, it's all over now."

And the villagers one and all knew old Andrew, and they loved him, too; and they would stand for hours together to listen to his stories; and they wished with him that the good old times would come back again, but sighed with him, too, as they said, "There was no hope o' that." And it was they had given him the name of Old Andrew, the weaver, for he was in truth now the only one of the craft, where erst all had been weavers.

But the industry of even his loom had begun to flag. Days and days would pass by, whilst it was still; and these intervals of idleness kept growing more frequent and longer. Even when the old sound was heard in the cottage, it seemed languid and dull, and the shuttle flew less swiftly and less joyously.

Each day Andrew saw his bread diminishing. He had generally had a bit for any beggar that strayed to his door, and many a one had gone away blessing him for his charity; but now his cupboard was almost always empty, for his decreasing employment, even with the help of the charity which he was fain to receive from others, barely furnished him with his daily meal. He foresaw that soon he must come upon the parish—a galling thought at all times, and to all; for the pittance which the law forces men to dole out, brings with it none of the sympathies of charity to soothe the wounded feelings of him who receives it. But at this period, and for Andrew, it was still more terrible. In their mistaken philanthropy, or their worldly wisdom, the rulers of the land had just changed the laws for the relief of the poor; and caused in every district those unsightly piles to be erected, now so conspicuous in the vicinity of every considerable town, and which are at once recognized as the "Union Workhouses." One of these had, a short time before, been finished for the district to which Andrew's village belonged; but it was at a long distance, and if he was to make use of its shelter he must leave not only his cottage but the very lanes and fields that were so dear to him, to go into fresh and far less beautiful scenes, amid strangers. Then the neighborhood was full of surmises and reports about the misery of the new prison—for as such it was universally regarded by those for whom it was professedly built. The village rung with stories of the insults and hardships endured by some who had been forced to take up their abode in it. Doubtless there was considerable exaggeration in these rumors; still, in truth, there was much to startle a tottering old man in the prospect before him; and the addition, in this particular case, of a strict and unbending board of guardians and a harsh master at the workhouse, left him but little hope of exemption or comfort.

But there was yet another thing that pressed still more heavily on the old man's mind. Andrew was a Catholic; and, as far as conviction and a love for his religion went, he was a sincere one. We cannot say that, in his earlier years, he had shown himself a very pious one. The gaiety of youth, and his own village accomplishments, had led him into much dissipation of mind, and into many negligences which now he regretted. But he had always been punctual to his Sunday duties; he had occasionally at least, nay, with tolerable regularity, approached the holy sacraments; and though thoughtless and hasty, and over fond of amusement, still he had not been an habitual drunkard or a libertine.

There were, however, many things that he looked back to with sorrow. Now that age had taken away the wishes and the powers of youth, the old lessons of his childhood came back to his mind in a new light, and told him of the necessity of preparing for another change, and of doing it by making amends for the past. So it was now his delight to trudge, in the morning, to the little chapel on the opposite side of the hill; both to assist at the Holy Mass, and have a few words of consolation and advice from Father Peter: and at least once in the month he approached what he now regarded as his viaticum—the bread sent from heaven, to conduct old men such as him thither.

But the road to the workhouse lay just in the opposite direction from that to the chapel; and he felt that if once he entered its walls, he must give up all hopes of ever again assisting at the Holy Sacrifice. And though he knew that Father Peter would not fail to visit him, yet it must be seldom, and, perhaps, when he most wanted him, those at whose mercy he would be, would care little to send seven or eight miles for him. Oh! it was a bitter and a dreary thought; yet each day it grew upon him—each day the necessity of taking the fatal

step became more pressing. Andrew had not been sufficiently schooled in the science of the cross to bear up against it like a true Christian, and his heart was filled with murmurings; and he almost cursed the mis-called charity, which, to preserve a man from starving, dragged him away from all that made life worth preserving.

At length his empty cupboard and empty table told him that the day was come; he must absolutely starve, or go into the workhouse. One hope alone remained; yet it was scarcely a hope. "He would go and speak to Father Peter about it; yet what could Father Peter do for him?"

It was in the afternoon of a sweet day of June that he locked his cottage door, and set off with the support of his trusty knotted stick, to go to the house of his old pastor. He had good reason to go, for he had had no breakfast; and he had waited till all his neighbors had finished their dinner, hoping that some chance might furnish him with a meal. But he had been disappointed: and so, with nothing better than a bit of crust, which he had begged to assuage his hunger, he trudged on along the well known path. It led across the church-yard. A lot of urchins, all well known to old Andrew, were enjoying a glorious game of romps amongst the tombstones, spite of the terrors of the sexton's stick, but they all ran at once to welcome their old crony Andrew, and as he seemed tottering in his walk, some offered even to lead him and assist him. But, no; he would not spoil their sports; time and care would soon enough do that: so he gave them a kind word, and sent them back to their merry game. For awhile he could not help standing to watch their gambols, as they leaped from stone to stone, and pursued each other round the trees, and dodged about the iron-palisaded monuments; and he thought of many hours which he had spent like them, and, perchance, of some which he wished had been spent better; and wiping a tear from his eye, he tottered onwards.

The good priests's house was reached. His first care was to give his old friend a hearty meal, for he soon found out how much he needed it. And then came the consultation.

But Andrew was right in his forebodings. "What could Father Peter do for him?" He felt, in sooth, the old man's situation as deeply as himself could do; but he was but a poor country missionary, dependant upon very precarious means: he had many to weep for as destitute as Andrew; and though he might eke out of his own poverty a little alms for each, yet the aggregate would be far from sufficient for the entire support of only one.

What, then, could he do? Why, only give the poor old man such consolation as lay in his power. He well knew the cruelty of the boasted poor-laws, and the grinding hard-heartedness of those who administered them; but to have joined Andrew in deploring these, would not have diminished his horror at encountering them, nor blunt his feelings when suffering under them. He strove, therefore, to represent things in the best light he could; and promised often to come and see him in his new abode; and then added something about the consolations of religion, and the blessings of poverty, and the advantages of suffering, especially when applied to the expiation of the past, and directed by the love of Him, who "suffered for us, leaving us an example."

The old man could not gainsay anything of this; still he felt cast down, and half inclined to murmur, when this last prop of his hopes was taken away from him. He had, indeed, foreseen that such must be the result of his conference with his pastor, and had felt that it could not be otherwise; still, the hope, however baseless, that perhaps Father Peter might advise him to remain in his cottage, had stood between him and the dreaded workhouse. But now that it was gone and the pauper's death-bed, and the pauper's grave, presented themselves to him, without the most distant chance of escaping them, the desolation that came over his senses was almost stunning.

Sorrowfully then, most sorrowfully, did he turn his steps—we were going to say, homeward, but alas! he had no home now. Sorrowfully did he cast his last look on the little cross

now gilded by the warm rays of the setting sun, that stood on the gable of the chapel; and slowly and painfully did he climb the hill leading up to the old churchyard. Arrived there, beneath the lime trees, he paused to take one last and lingering look around. The sun had set, but there was sufficient light for him to recognize each well remembered spot; and fondly, though sorrowfully, did he dwell on the recollections that each awakened. At length his eye sought his own cottage. The chimney only could be seen amidst the trees; but he knew it was his. There was smoke curling up from the chimneys of most around, harbinger of the evening meal; but none came out from his; and his eye seemed to penetrate into its cold looking and desolate interior, where his now idle loom formed almost the sole remaining furniture.

He could not bear the thought of returning to it. It seemed to him even colder and more comfortless than the grave. He was standing at the foot of one which had long been undisturbed, and over which the grass and thick curly moss had spread a bed far softer than he had pressed for many a year. It seemed far more inviting to his weary limbs, than his hard mattress on the floor there below. The evening was calm and mild—so at length he laid down his stick, and seated himself on the yielding turf. By degrees the inclination to lie down came stronger upon him, and at last he reclined himself entirely upon it, and rested his weary and anxious head upon the mossy pillow.

But his cares diminished not; and, do what he would, he could not bring himself to bow down, as he well knew he ought, to the dispensations of Providence.

"Patience," he said to himself, "yes, I must have patience. Well, I know it! but I fears I haven't got it. It's all very well to read about patience, sitting by a nice fire, with a good quarter loaf and a lump of cheese beside one, but it's not so easy to practise it, when they are eaten up, and there's no hope of any more coming in their place—aye, and it's all very well to preach about patience to other people. O, Father Peter, I dare say you believe what you say—and I dare say it's all very good and true—but, change your snug little parlour for my cottage yonder, and let's see how you'd be able to preach then. Oh! I think then you'd be a little more indulgent with such poor old creatures as me, and not chide us for want of resignation.

"Well, but ain't I ungrateful to say so? for your chidings was always that of a father, and you've well made up for it by many a good meal to poor old Andrew. May God bless you for it, and keep you from such a sore trial as mine is."

"So then," his thoughts went on after a pause, "there's no hope left. I must go to the workhouse, and be locked up, and have a pauper's dirty-looking dress put on me, for fear I should run away; and never be allowed to wander amongst the grave-stones, to read the names of my old cronies, who lie here at peace.—Ah! you were happy to be taken off before these sad times. I wish I was with you. I wish I was lying here below the quiet sod, with the wind singing sweetly through the lime trees, and all my cares and sorrows buried beneath five feet of earth—'twould be a more comfortable and happier place than one of the coarse beds in the big house over yonder." * * *

How long he went on in his reverie 'twere hard to say, for occasionally it was broken by short fits of forgetfulness, when the weariness produced by his morning's fast and his walk brought sleep upon his eyelids.

Suddenly, however, he was awakened from it, by an apparent movement of ground beneath him. He lay for a moment trembling and quite paralysed with terror, wondering if he had been dreaming, when the upheaving of the sod became too sensible for him to doubt of its reality. He started to his feet, and would have fled, but fear took away, in the instant, the energy it had imparted, so that he clasped hold of a grave-stone for support, and stood gazing in intense affright at the spot on which he had been lying.

Slowly the turf was pushed up until it burst open, and disclosed a human form, endeavoring, as it were with difficulty, to extricate itself from some entanglement below, and gradually making its way out. It soon succeeded and stood before him,

"Glad I've got free from that old fellow's coffin at last," was its exclamation, as it drew its last foot out of the grave; "positively I think my legs are growing more bent every year with its weight. Ha! how do you do Andrew, my old boy? hope your rheumatism is no worse for sleeping on the grass! Do pray now, just knock the dust off my coat behind. It isn't much the worse for wear, is it? It only comes out once a year, you know, so it ought to last."

Andrew stared in bewildered terror, unable to move a joint or utter a word—nay, hardly to breathe, and well might he be astonished.

The figure before him was that of a young man, somewhat faded, however, evidently from dissipation. He was dressed in a very antique style, such as Andrew had never seen, save in some very old pictures that were in the manor house, before it was pulled down. His coat was somewhat of a claret color, reaching to the knees, and, if the phrase be allowed, full bot-tomed, and garnished moreover with lace and embroidery; his waistcoat was richer still, with long lappets half covering his thighs; and his nether garments were of a bright colored silk, adorned at the knees with ribbons and silver buckles, the latter rather tarnished. There were buckles too, very large ones, on his shoes, which were extremely pointed at the toes. And on his head he wore a three-cornered pinched up hat, with a shining jewel and a long jaunty feather stuck on one side of it.

There he stood surveying himself as best he could from head to foot; brushing off every particle of dust he could detect on his habiliments, arranging his frills and ruffles, and, above all, examining the symmetry of his legs—eyeing them in every direction—now front, now back, even stroking them down gently with his hands, as if to feel if there were any excre-

"What a thing it is," he said, when he had completed his survey, "to be buried under a fat alderman! Why didn't he leave his body, as he did his money, in London? What with his corporation and his lead coffin, he has fairly pushed out a hunch in my back-bone;" and he threw back his elbows, as if to reduce the fancied excrecence; "and, what is even worse, he has given me a pair of bandy legs. Do you think I've straightened them enough, Andrew?"

But as if doubtful on the matter, he proceeded to insert, first one, and then the other, between two grave-stones that were very near neighbors to each other, and essayed to improve their symmetry, much as you may have seen a lad try to straighten a crooked stick.

Poor Andrew!—he stood stock still in unmitigated terror, unable to move or speak—his mouth wide open, yet gasping for breath; his eyes dilated, and his old knees knocking against each other, as if the concentrated violence of a twenty years' palsy had come upon him. At length, however, his extraordinary visitor perceived his agitation, and at once tried to calm it.

"Don't be afraid, Andrew," he said, "I'm very harmless; always was to everybody but myself—else, perhaps, I might have carried more wrinkles to the grave than you can see in my face now," and he stroked down his cheeks with apparent complacency; though, all the while, Andrew could not help remarking a certain air of anxiety in his countenance, quite at variance with his lively tone of voice and free and easy manner.

"To tell you the truth, Andrew," he went on, "I laid my lungs to rest a little earlier than quite suited my own inclinations, and having heard you wishing to lie by, the fancy to breathe a little more of this air, that you are opening your mouth so wide to catch, came upon me, and the thought, too, that perhaps you wouldn't be unwilling to change places with me. Eh! what say you to it, my old boy?"

"Heard me wishing to lie by!" at length stammered forth Andrew. "Why, I never spoke at all!"

"No, not with your lips," was the reply. "But, as you laid your head on my grave, the thought that passed through it, seemed to echo very clearly even through the lead and fat of the old alderman. Now, you would like, wouldn't you, to get rid of rheumatism and the workhouse, and to sleep quietly beneath the green sod, with the lime trees whispering sweetly

overhead? Only look now, this is the very spot to suit your fancy. Is it a bargain?"

"But," again faltered Andrew, "do you corpses there below always hear the thoughts of those who sit upon your graves? and are you allowed to come up and speak to them at your will?"

"Why no! not always, at least," replied the other. "But one night in the year a little liberty is permitted us to stretch our legs on the turf, and get rid for awhile of the rather uneasy position in which some of us are lying. Ugh! I think I feel the corner of that big fellow's coffin pressing into my chest even now. Have you never heard, Andrew, the sexton say, how he has sometimes found corpses turned round in their coffins? Poor man, he was terrified to think they must have been buried alive. Nothing of the sort, I assure you. They had only shifted their position when they went into their graves again, after their yearly night of freedom. I have tried every possible position myself, under the gouty alderman, but have at length returned to my first one, though it does so grievously incommode my back-bone and my shins. I hope the hunch is not very visible. Is it?"

Andrew, by degrees, had been recovering his courage, and now the lively voice of his extraordinary visitor seemed to awaken in his breast somewhat of the shrewdness that had characterized him when younger.

"If you are as uncomfortable as you describe," said he, "I think yours would hardly be the bed I should choose to lie in. One 'ud think there were many resting-places here better worth having than yours."

"As for that, I don't think you'd find much difference in reality," replied the ghostly fop, with a strange grimace, half disappointment, half waggishness; "for you know, except on this one night in the year, we don't feel much of the incommo-diousness of our lodgings. It is only when we get on the top of our graves, and find our joints all so put out of shape, that we wish to shift our quarters. But that would be no great annoyance to you; for the old alderman could hardly set your legs awry, or bend your back more than rheumatism and old age have done already."

"But why," asked Andrew, "are you so solicitous to appear elegant on this one night? There's no one here, is there, to see and admire you?"

"Oh!" said the visitor, hesitating, as if to find out some evasion of the question, "I told you I was in hopes that you would change places with me, and, of course, I should like to make an impression on my re-appearance in the world."

"I faith, and you would make an impression," said Andrew, venturing even to laugh, "if you were to go down into the village yonder in your present dress. But that ain't it," he pursued, taking a malicious pleasure in pressing a topic which he clearly saw the other wished to avoid. "You have some other reason for wishing to be so spruce. You expected to meet other company to-night, very different from old Andrew, the weaver."

The poor fellow looked puzzled, and unwilling to reply. The anxious expression of his face grew more marked—but at length, with a shrug of his shoulders, as much as to say, "Well, I can't help it," he went on.

"True, Andrew, you have guessed right. I do expect to meet some other company. The church-yard is full of them already. Every grave has by this time sent forth its inmate, and they are engaged on every side of us, in the sports and pursuits that suit them best. I do intend to pay my respects to some of them before renewing my acquaintance with the alderman's coffin, if you won't do that for me."

It was Andrew's turn to look awkward now, for his fears began again to get the better of him. It was not at all comfortable to think that he was alone, at midnight, surrounded by whole generations of dancing corpses.

"Don't be alarmed at what I tell you," said his companion perceiving his trouble. "It isn't often we catch a really live body amongst us, at this our revel, and if we do, he is seldom wide awake like you. Sometimes, indeed, a drunken pig of a

fellow has been found asleep among the graves; and, I must confess, we have delighted in tweaking his nose, and pinching his shins, and have given him some marks of our frolics, which he has been unable to account for the next day. But, in general, we ghosts are very civil; especially to those who wish, like you, so soon to join our company."

Andrew shuddered a little—his wishes in that respect were undergoing a change, but he said nothing about it at present, for policy and curiosity, too, counselled a different mode of tactics. So again mustering up his courage, he resumed his attack upon the *ci-devant* fop.

"Why can't I see all these fine folk you tell me of? If I am so soon to take up my abode in the churchyard, it is but fair that I should suit myself with lodgings. Can't I have the opportunity of asking a few others what they have to say for their tenements?"

The disappointment of the ghost grew deeper; but he said, "As you have asked me, I can't refuse," and he stretched forth his hand towards the old man. He shrunk back from his touch, but after repeated assurance that no harm was intended, allowed his mysterious companion to lay his finger on his eyelids.

In an instant what a change came over the scene. Although the sky above was murky black, yet was the churchyard most brilliantly illuminated. It was not the light of the sun, it was not the light of the moon, it was not possible to see whence it proceeded, or how it was produced; but it pervaded every part, and was everywhere equally diffused, so that every grave-stone was distinctly visible, and even the inscriptions legible to a considerable distance.

The church, too, stood forth more majestically than Andrew had ever seen it. The pinnacles and battlements which had been sadly dilapidated, were all perfect; the carved work that had seemed so time-eaten, was restored in all its sharpness and beauty; the sculptured monsters in the string courses looked truly hideous, in fact, almost endowed with life; the niches were filled with saintly statues, and the tracery of the windows, which had been quite removed from some, and in others hidden by brick-work and plaster, was all renewed and the interstices of their varied patterns were filled up with colored glass of the richest dyes, through which there streamed a light, far surpassing in brilliancy even that which illuminated the churchyard, and decking the turf and the trees within its reach with all the colors of the rainbow.

But the chancel—it was scarcely possible to gaze upon its windows; and Andrew was obliged to shade his eyes with his hand, to be able to look at them. They were filled with the effigies of saintly bishops, and priests, and statesmen, and warriors, and queens and virgins—and the old man could scarcely tear away his eyes from the glorious vision. He thought that heaven itself could not show anything more beautiful. But he was at length disturbed from his contemplation of it, by the rout which was growing wild around him. He turned to look—everything for a moment seemed dark in contrast with the brilliancy he had been gazing upon, but soon his vision grew clearer, and he could see it all.

Men and women of all ranks and ages, and of every variety of dress and manner that fancy could depict, were engaged in the wildest tumult of pleasure. The churchyard seemed indefinitely enlarged to hold the motley multitude, yet still its belt of gigantic limes encircled it. The most extravagant pictures of fairy or hobgoblin revels, *Tam-o-Shanter's* dance of witches, or the midnight orgies witnessed by Faust in the Hartz mountains, were nothing compared to what now met Andrew's astonished eyes. Nine-pins, and bowls, and skittles, and hockey, and a thousand other games that he had never dreamt of, were going on with an ardor and eagerness such as had never entered into the hardest struggles of his youth. Now a party at football swept past him, regardless of grave-stones, or rails, or monuments; madly they dashed over every obstacle in pursuit of their headlong game; anon he was enveloped in a whirl of dancers, who circled round him with a rapidity that would put to shame the giddiest waltz;

and as the sport went on it grew wilder and madder, till in their efforts to outdo each other in their freaks and gambols, Andrew thought that some of them must have gone clean over the tops of the lime-trees, and come tumbling through the roofs of the cottages at the bottom of the hill. Yet, withal, whenever he could catch a glimpse of any of their countenances, he could not help remarking in them the same expression of eager anxiety which had struck him in his first ghostly acquaintance. And frequently, too, in the midst of their boisterous mirth, he saw them look fearfully upwards, and instantly avert their eyes as if they had met some most unwelcome object. He too looked up; and the cause of their apprehension was at once apparent. The clock dial, high up on the steeple, seemed swelled out to proportions quite gigantic. The figures on the disc glowed like living coals, and the huge fingers streamed from the centre like jets of livid flame, as they pointed to the passing hours. It looked to Andrew like the face of some huge monster, the presiding demon of these unholy revels, grinning on the scenes below, and mocking with malignant delight at the chagrin of the revellers, as they saw the hours of their joy fly so swiftly away. His countenance too grew troubled at the sight, and he turned away with a shudder. Hitherto none of the boisterous crew around him had seemed to notice Andrew, so he turned to his spruce companion who was still at his side, his face growing longer and more melancholy as he watched the progress of the glowing index over the fiery dial-plate, and begged of him to introduce him to some of the company.

He did so, stating the wishes of the old man, as he understood them, to exchange places with one or other of them, if he could suit himself. He was immediately overwhelmed with offers. One would have him to go here, to see what a lovely view was commanded from the spot where his grave was situated, but he remarked how it was trodden completely bare by the numerous visitors, who had made use of it to help them to enjoy the prospect. Then he was dragged away by another to see his beautiful monument: but he had that very day seen the lads jumping across it; aye, he had himself when a boy, danced on the slab that covered it. Now he was pulled here, now there, till his old limbs seemed to partake of something of the agility of the goblins that surrounded him, and his blood ran young again through his veins, as he was carried over the top of the highest grave-stones without an effort. But he had some fault to find with every locality; so in succession they left him in despair to join again the mad revel.

At length an imposing old gentleman, in a flowing wig and richly embroidered coat, saluted him with the greatest politeness, requesting that he might have the honor of offering him a truly comfortable bed inside the church. "We cannot go to see it just now," said he, "but, no doubt, you recollect the beautiful marble tomb at the end of the south aisle, where the disconsolate widow, surrounded by her lovely children, is weeping over the urn of her dear departed husband. I am that husband; and he covered his face with his hands, as if to hide his tears.

But Andrew doubted whether there were any tears to be hidden, for he well recollected the tomb. In his boyish days he had many a time followed parties of sight-seers into the church, and had heard the sexton descant on the merits of this identical tomb, which covered the remains of one of the possessors of the manor house, where, as has been said, he had seen the old pictures. In fact, he thought he recognized the old gentleman, as the original of one of the portraits, though, if it were a correct effigy, he must have been much more stiff and formal in life than now.

But Andrew recollected, also, a little bye anecdote connected with this same monument, to the effect, that the disconsolate widow, who looked so sorrow-stricken in marble, had so much flesh and blood in her real constitution, that almost before the cement of the tomb was dry, aye, in less than six months from the death of her first, she had cast herself into the arms of a second husband, and had afterwards combined with him to strip the very children, who, in the marble, were seen to cling

to her so affectionately, of all their property. This had been the ruin of the family. For law and extravagance soon pulled the estates to pieces, and, within Andrew's own recollection, had pulled down the house.

But all this Andrew kept to himself. He merely signified to the polite old man, that he well knew the tomb, but expressed his surprise that he should be willing to surrender so respectable and comfortable a resting place, in exchange for one of the poorest cottages in the village below.

"Why, as for the matter of that," he replied, "I have no particular reason to be dissatisfied with my position in the south aisle. The family pew is by the side of it, and the fire-place there keeps it very dry, and not altogether uncomfortable. Indeed, I don't know if it is not quite as pleasant as the old hall there used to be."

Andrew thought, perhaps he was not far out there, for there was a rumor afloat, that the disconsolate widow was about as kind to her spouse before his death, as she was faithful after. But again he held his tongue and listened.

"I assure you, my dear Andrew," the old Gent. went on,—all seemed as if by inspiration to know his name—"I was always fond of doing a service to others, and shall be most happy to offer you my monument as a resting place for your sorrows."

Andrew did not exactly understand this disinterestedness. He had a vague notion of having heard his grandfather say, that one of the very disinterested lords of the old manor house, had contrived, by lending money to his neighbors amidst the greatest professions of friendship, to gain possession of many of their broad fields, and, among others, of some belonging to his (Andrew's) own family. And he had a shrewd suspicion, too, that this very affectionate old gentleman was the identical personage. So he could not help imagining that there was something in the back ground which he was unwilling to have known, and he was confirmed in his surmise, by seeing lurking amidst his smiles, that anxious look which he had observed in all, and the quick and troubled glance at the fiery clock.

So he pressed the old fellow with a few more questions. He soon became awkward and embarrassed, and at length, to avoid a direct explanation, made a most profound and obsequious bow, and disappeared behind one of the buttresses of the church.

And now Andrew stood alone. The revel continued around him. It had grown wilder than ever; and the laughter more loud and boisterous. But, at the same time, it seemed to Andrew's ears to sound hollow and lugubrious; there was something in it inexpressibly discordant, and ever and anon, he was doubting whether he were listening to bursts of merriment or despairing shrieks. The light, too, appeared to have changed. It was as bright as ever, but had become sickly and overspread everything with a paleish blue, like that produced by the flame of spirits of wine—and the demon-like face of the clock-dial above, grown more gigantic than ever, poured forth a flickering flame from the figures and hands, which now moved visibly onwards with a hissing sound.

Fear, such as he had never experienced before, came creeping over the limbs of the old man, and seemed to be curdling his blood. He turned round, with the intention of escaping from this scene of unholy revelry, for such he now regarded it, when he once more encountered his friend of the claret colored coat. But, how changed! His dress hung loose about him. A great hump had grown out on his back; and his legs were truly distorted. His ruffles and frills, and his long hair had become lank and spiritless, and the feather in his hat drooped mournfully over his now ghastly features.

"I see, you have made up your mind, Andrew," he said, despondingly. "I boded little good from introducing you to our revels; but I could not resist the laws of the Church-yard, when you asked to see them. My hopes are all over now, and I must soon lay my bones again in their low and loathsome bed, to await another"—a shudder ran over his limbs as he spoke this, making the long feather in his hat quiver like an aspen leaf—"and a more fearful waking."

"What can all this mean?" cried Andrew, himself quaking

scarcely less than his companion. "Why have you become so sorrowful; and why is everything so changed?"

He looked into the eyes of the poor fellow as he spoke. They seemed like balls of rolling fire; yet could he see in them the working of a grief such as tongue might not utter.

"Listen," was his reply. "Again, I am constrained to speak, since you have asked. All these bodies that you see, as it were, endowed with life, have souls belonging to them—but they are not here."

"Then where are they?" exclaimed Andrew, gasping for breath.

"In Hell."

Andrew almost sunk to the ground with affright. "In hell!" he said, with a convulsive start. "How is it possible, then, that you are all so joyous and full of mirth?"

"Were we not joyous and full of mirth," replied the miserable form before him, "whilst we were in this life? And yet, did we not know even then, what must be our portion? Are there not thousands now, who strive to drown, in the tumult of worldly things and worldly pleasures, the voice that comes up from below, to tell them of the abyss of eternal torture that is yawning beneath their feet? What wonder then that we should spend these few hours of freedom allowed to our bodies, in such revelry as you have witnessed! Useless would it be for us to spend them otherwise; we cannot reverse the doom that is upon us. But those who are still in life, are they not truly insane, as once were we? For they may escape our miseries if they will, but they will not, and yet seem joyous. You have wondered, too, that we were all so anxious to exchange places with you, but do you wonder now? Oh! Andrew! Andrew! if we could have only one of those days—only one of those hours, that you are so anxious to get rid of, how would we not rejoice! How would we not employ them in doing penance! how would we not welcome your poverty and your sorrows, if we might use them, as you may, now! Farewell—forget not what you have seen and heard—and may we never meet again."

Quite bewildered between pity for the unfortunate beings, of whose revels he had been the unwilling spectator, and fear for himself, Andrew stood for some time rivetted to the spot; and a confusion came over him as if he had fainted, which took from his sight all the strange objects that were around him. By degrees, however, his senses seemed one by one to awaken, and when at length his eye-sight grew clear, he found himself standing opposite to the western door of the church. It was partly open; and through it there gushed forth a flood of light, as intensely brilliant as that which bursts from the smelting furnace, when the cake of clay is pierced to let forth the liquid iron. He could see too, from a shadow on the gravel pathway before the door, that some one was standing just within the threshold, and a strange curiosity, mingled still with a little apprehension, impelled him, as it were irresistibly, to approach. As he drew near the figure, whose shadow he had remarked, hastily took hold of the door, as if to close it, to prevent his entrance; but, on looking at him, only threw it wider open, and invited him to enter.

It was an old and apparently wayworn man, who was thus acting the part of verger; and judging from his appearance, Andrew thought that poverty had weighed upon him even heavier than on himself. His face was wan, and marked with deep-drawn furrows; he was lame too, and in his gait there was something that told of intense and long-continued pain. His clothes were old and tattered, and evidently had not been made to his measure; for while one article of dress hung loose and flabby about his limbs, his coat strove in vain to reach his nether garments, and the cuffs of his sleeves nearly touched his elbows. Still there was a cheerful, though subdued serenity in his countenance, and an inexpressibly sweet hilarity in his voice, very different from the forced mirth of those among whom Andrew had been spending the first part of the night.

"I thought it was one of that wretched crew without," he said, "that wanted to intrude into the holy place. But I see it's you, Andrew. Come in—you're welcome here."

Andrew stared.

"You're surprised that I know your name," continued his new acquaintance, "but it's not the first time we've met. Do you recollect, some two or three years ago, a tottering old man coming to your door to beg a bit of bread? You made him sit down with you and share your dinner. You didn't know I was a Catholic, nor did I know that you were one of my faith; but you gave me charity for the love of God, and I blessed you in my heart; and He, for whose love you shared your meal with me, has heard my blessing. That was the last meal I ever tasted. I was, after that, rejected from door to door, till I sunk down exhausted, and was discovered by some countrymen, only time enough to be carried to some cottage near, and to have the assistance of your good Father Peter before I died. Now I can give you some return for your charity. I am the last comer here, so am by rule the verger. Come in, you will see what will do you good."

Andrew followed him, and he closed the door. But what a sight presented itself to the sight of the old weaver! It was with difficulty he could recognize the spot where he was standing—yet he knew that it was beneath the tower; he had often been there when a lad, for he had been rather fond of coming to assist his old cronies in tolling the funeral bell. But then it was a dark and dingy hole, strewn about with grave-tools, and coals, and faggots. There used to be a dilapidated bier standing in one corner, and a gaily painted fire-engine in another, with its uncouth black leathern buckets dangling in a row on the wall above it. Then the ceiling was low, cutting in two parts its solitary narrow window, and it was nothing better than the rough uncased beams and boards of the belfry floor. There was also a brick unplastered wall to divide it from the church, through which a door of unplanned boards led into the nave; and the walls, and beams, and boards, and every nook and every crevice were coated with a groundwork of dust, and festoons of cobwebs, which seemed not to have been disturbed for centuries.

But now all that was unsightly, or betokened negligence, was gone. The ceiling of black old oak, panelled and deeply moulded, had ascended high up into the tower, above the top of the great west window, which, half blocked up, had hitherto lighted only the belfry, but now stood forth in all the imposing grandeur of its matchless tracery. The dust and cobwebs on the walls had made way for quaint inscriptions and pious emblems. The unplastered brick wall was quite cleared away, revealing to view an arch of noble yet graceful proportions; massive, as well it should be, to carry the tall tower and spire above; but, at the same time elegant, from the well-marked and numerous lines of its deep sunk mouldings. And now the eye ranged unobstructed through the whole length of the pillared nave. But here too, how was not everything changed! A lofty screen of the most delicate tracery now stretched across it, separating it from the chancel. It was of oak; but little of the bare wood was visible, for it seemed one blaze of burnished gold, relieved, and its splendor heightened here and there by the brightest colors. The arch above had been formerly blocked up with plaster, and on the surface thus obtained, the Queen's arms, supported by the fabled lion and unicorn, together with the names of the churchwardens under whose auspices the church had once been whitewashed, were rudely painted. But these emblems of a national religion had given place to the more universal one of Christianity. The screen was now surmounted by a majestic cross which reached almost to the centre of the arch. It was exquisitely carved, and glowed with gold and colors, and even, as Andrew thought, with precious stones. He had never before seen one so large, except in pictures, and it at once absorbed all his attention. Yet not the cross; for there hung One upon it with his arms outstretched, disfigured and distorted, yet beautiful to look upon even in his agony; and this it was that rivetted his eyes to the spot. It was not like one of those brass or ivory representations of the crucifixion of Jesus, which he had often seen, and by many of which he had been greatly affected. The impression which they conveyed to the mind was feeble, as compared with what he felt as he gazed on that before him. It seemed to be

of real flesh and blood. He could fancy the eyes looked steadfastly upon him, at once in sorrow and in love; that the breast was heaving in agony, the limbs quivering and convulsed, and that the blood was actually trickling from the wounds! And, oh what wounds! Though deep, and wide, and jagged, they excited no horror, no repugnance. They were most pleasant to behold; yea, they shone with a radiance mild, yet brighter than the ruby. And beside the cross, as if substitutes for the lion and unicorn, stood Mary and John, but with such an agony of grief depicted on their countenances, that the tears ran down the old cheeks of Andrew when he looked at them.

Ranged along the screen were seven other figures. At first Andrew took them for groups of lamps or candlesticks, so brilliant was the light that streamed from them; but, by gazing steadfastly, he saw that they were mysterious figures like angels, with wings above closed over their heads, and wings below hiding their legs and feet, and wings expanded on each side as if supporting them; and all these wings seemed filled with eyes, whence came forth a brightness too dazzling to be long looked upon. Behind the screen a mass of light was spread, like a cloud of more than meridian brightness, but it was impossible to recognize anything within it.

Having at length satisfied himself with this glorious scene, the old man turned to look around the church, though ever and anon his eyes wandered back to the mild countenance of the crucified Saviour and his resplendent wounds. Here, too, he found everything changed. Galleries, and pews, and pulpit, and reading desk, and all the appurtenances of modern worship and modern comfort were gone—here, as beneath the tower, the old beams of the roof had shaken off their dust and cobwebs, and instead were decked out with varied colors, vying in brilliancy with the rainbow. The ceiling, reaching up to the very apex of the high pitched roof, was of a deep azure, sprinkled over with stars of gold. The bosses were all restored and gilded. The corbels and projecting heads of the beams were held up by angels, arrayed in flowing vests of white and gold, and bearing shields charged with the emblems of sorrow and redemption. Numerous coronas of antique form were suspended from the roof—they, too, glittering with gold and colors, and filled with lighted tapers, which diffused a soft yet intense light over the whole of the church. Even the walls were resplendent with azure and vermillion, and green and purple, harmoniously blended together in graceful and flowing patterns, intermingled with rich ornaments in gold and touching emblems—among which the monogram of mercy and of love, the name of Jesus, and that of hope and purity, the name of Mary, both surmounted by shining crowns, were most frequent and conspicuous. Statues, too, of holy saints, standing in gorgeous niches, were disposed at intervals along the walls; and the very pillars were enwreathed with glowing fillets of red and blue, surcharged with moving legends—"Jesus, mercy;" "Mary, help." The font had been carried back to its old situation, near the south porch. Its chaste tracery was all restored, and a carved canopy of gilded oak had replaced the uncouth lid that Andrew recollected to have seen upon it.

As he continued his survey, he found that all the tombs of modern days had also disappeared; even that which had stood in the south aisle, and which the old gentlemen, its occupant had so kindly offered to him. But on the floor, opposite to where it had stood, and hitherto probably concealed by the boarded floor of the family pew adjoining, were two full length effigies of a knight and his lady of polished brass, beneath elaborate canopies of the same metal, the interstices and lines being all filled up with wax, tinted in various colors. On the spot formerly occupied by the tomb itself, just beneath the window, there was now an altar with all its ornaments and appurtenances; the fire-place mentioned before being transformed into a sacarium; and a cupboard for books, which was stuck against the pillar on the opposite side, into a canopied niche containing the statue of the patron—that is, the patron of the altar, not of the living—the sainted Edward.

At the corresponding end of the north aisle, an equally staid

change had taken place. There had formerly been the churchwardens' pew, and behind it a graceful arch had been walled up, so as to cut off a portion of the aisle, and form the vestry by the side of the chancel. But the pew and the wall, and another too which had filled up an arch opening into the chancel itself had vanished, and been replaced by screens, if possible, of more delicate and fairy-like tracery than the great one beneath the rood: and now this desolate looking recess, in which an uncouth iron-bound chest and sundry pegs on which to hang the parson's gown and surplice had been the only furniture, had become a chapel, where ornaments and enrichments had been bestowed with a more lavish hand than in any other part of the church which Andrew had as yet seen. Nor was it difficult to guess the reason—the tower of ivory, the mystic ark, the star, the lily, and many other emblems of her whom all generations were to call blessed, and which were scattered over the walls, the beams, the rafters, and the screens, would have sufficiently shown to what sweet saint this spot was dedicated, even if there had not been just outside, beneath a canopy of azure and gold, the statue of this most blessed amongst women, holding in her arms the thrice blessed fruit of her womb.

Just opposite this lovely chapel, but a little way removed into the centre of the aisle, was a figure of one who seemed to have chosen this spot for his resting-place, that so he might sleep secure beneath the glance of Mary. Andrew well recollected the ponderous tomb; but it had been sadly dilapidated, and almost hidden too by cumbrous pews. But now it stood alone in the centre of the aisle, protected by a low railing of curiously wrought iron, with sockets at the angles for wax tapers, which even now were there and burning brightly, as if emblematic of the hope that had lighted them. The tomb itself was polished black marble, divided at the side into compartments by canopied tracery; and in each compartment was the hooded figure of a headman engaged in prayer. Upon the slab was the recumbent effigy of a knight, all clothed in armor. His bare head rested on his plumed helmet, his feet were supported by a noble dog, the emblem of fidelity, and his hands were clasped upon his breast as if in prayer.

But what most astonished Andrew, who, in his admiration of the changed aspect of the old church, had unconsciously wandered to the Lady chapel just described, was, to see by the side of his tomb, a little in advance of it, so as to be directly opposite the statue of the Virgin Mother, a kneeling figure the exact counterpart of that on the monument. It was clothed in dark but shining armor, that reflected back the light of the candles that burnt around the tomb; its hands were clasped as in the marble effigy, but its face was upturned towards that of the blessed Mary, with an expression of most ardent supplication.

The curiosity excited by this spectacle, made Andrew look round for the old verger to ask for an explanation, when, for the first time, he perceived that the bewilderment caused by the unlooked for burst of glory which he had been surveying, had hindered him from observing that the church was full of people. It was really thronged, with the exception of a narrow space down the middle of the nave, which served at once for a passage and to divide the sexes, for the men were ranged on the epistle side, the women, with one exception, that of the mail-clad knight, on the other. Like him all were on their knees; like him, too, all seemed engaged in silent but no doubt most earnest prayer, for they seemed insensible to everything around them; their hands were clasped firmly together, and their breasts were heaving, not rapidly indeed, nor convulsively, yet with an energy that told better than words of the desires that were pent up within.

They were of all ages and conditions in life, and dressed after a strange variety of fashions; but Andrew could not help remarking, how, generally speaking, those who wore what he fancied to be the most ancient costume, were nearest to the chancel, and that the dress gradually became more modern as it approached the door, so much so that at the very bottom of the church he fancied he could recognize some cloaks and bonnets which were quite familiar to him, yet he could not call to mind who had been the wearers of them.

He would very much have wished to draw closer to some of these and speak to them, but he dared not, for it seemed to him as if it would be a cruelty to disturb their devotions. He contented himself, therefore, with looking at them, till their devotion seemed to become contagious, for the desire to join in it came strongly upon him, and he would have knelt down by the side of the black knight, before the shrine of Mary, had not the old verger, who was still at his side, touched him, and whispered to him, "Not yet, Andrew, your turn is not come yet."

The sound of his voice, though he spoke in a whisper, startled Andrew for a moment, so discordant did it seem with the silent devotion of the mute figures around; but still it broke the magic of the scene, so that he himself no longer feared to speak, and to ask the meaning of what he saw.

"It is given to us, Andrew," his companion replied, "to know many things that go on in the world we have left, especially if they concern us in any way; and this is permitted to us both as a punishment and a consolation. You have wished to die, that you may escape the troubles that threaten you. You have been holding converse with those who have been condemned, but cannot find any one among them with whom you would like to change places. Another trial is now permitted to you. Is there any one here with whom you would make an exchange, I suppose I needn't mention myself; the poor verger, who has only just entered upon his office, cannot hope to give up his charge so soon. Well, God's will be done." And he cast a look of unbounded resignation on the rood, where hung Jesus between Mary and John.

"What!" said Andrew, "you don't mean to say that any one here, aye, even yourself, would be willing to change places with me. Would you leave this glorious church to return to the rough world—to live in such a cottage as mine is? You have seen it, you say, then you know how poor it is, yet it is changed, aye sadly changed, ever since then. O, for my part, I would wish for nothing better than to live and die here."

"Yet," his guide proceeded, "there is not one here who would not joyfully change places with you. Aye, if your cottage and your lot were ten times worse than they are, only the more joyfully would they be welcomed."

"How!" cried Andrew. "Why," and he began again to be afraid—"who are you?"

"O, no fear," said the verger, "we are your brethren, and loving ones too, and grateful."

"Grateful, for what?" asked Andrew, "what can I have done to deserve your love?"

"Have you not often," replied his venerable guide, and he looked at him with an expression of the most thankful affection as he spoke, "when you knelt before the altar of the little chapel there down in the valley, prayed, 'May the souls of the faithful departed rest in peace?'"

In an instant the truth flashed on the mind of Andrew. These whom he beheld kneeling before the image of Him who died for them, were the bodies of souls in purgatory: and they were employing this their night of freedom, not like the condemned wretches outside, in gaiety and and jollity, but in earnest prayer, if so they might move heaven to shorten the period of imprisonment.

How did he not now look upon them with an increased interest and a loving pity. A feeling of veneration even came over him, for he knew that though they were now barred from heaven, yet was their salvation secure; that soon, some of them perhaps in a few days, would be reigning amongst the saints in bliss; and that, at the day of judgment, every one of these bodies, even that of the ragged and limping verger at his side, would be seen shining brighter than stars and clothed in garments more brilliant than the sun.

Aroused by the thought, he once more cast his eyes around, to see if he could recognize any of the old frequenters of the chapel amongst the congregation. For he himself had followed many to their last home, under the north wall of the church, yard, where most of the Catholics had been buried; but, as before, his curiosity was foiled. Many a dress of very modern

ent did he distinguish, but with the exception of the old beggar at his side, he could not recognize the lineaments of even one. But as he looked his countenance gradually fell, and it was plain that some unpleasant thought was taking possession of his mind.

The assembled crowd was very great, and he would have wondered how the old church could hold it, had it not seemed to him as he began to think of the difficulty, that, like the church-yard, it had accommodated itself to the congregation; still, however, retaining its original characteristics, for there was not an arch, nor a pillar, nor a window more or less than usual. But what troubled Andrew was this. He had before observed that those who wore a more ancient form of dress were nearest to the chancel; as he looked now more attentively, he began to reckon how long a time some of them must have been here, for he was close beside one who must have lived when noble knights went forth to court or battle-field all clothed in iron armor; and he thought too that several others whom he saw in the crowd wore a no less antiquated garb than his. "Now," he said to himself, "it must have been a sight of years since they died. Do people then remain in purgatory so many hundreds of years?"

But as he looked lower down the church, his train of thought became still more dispiriting. For he remarked that very few who wore anything approaching to a modern dress had advanced beyond the middle of the church. They must have got on very slow.

He could no longer repress his desire to know the meaning of this, so at length referred the matter to his guide for explanation.

"In the main you're right, Andrew," he replied, "some have to spend a weary long while in purgatory, and perhaps we of modern times get through it more slowly than our ancestors."

"But why is this," exclaimed Andrew; "I have ever heard that God's mercies are above all His works; is He less merciful to us than to our ancestors?"

"No, not so," rejoined the old man, "God is truly merciful, and His mercy does not change with times and persons; but then He is just too. He must have His due. Don't you recollect having heard about the prison from which no one is let out till he has paid the utmost farthing?"

"Yes," said Andrew despondingly; for he thought of his own debts, and sighed at the prospect of having to pay every farthing of those. "Yes, I see it now, we are more cold and negligent, and more wicked than those of old. It is just that we should have more to pay."

"No, not exactly that neither," answered the verger. "People have been pretty much the same for wickedness in every age. I don't mean to say there haven't been some variations here and there in that respect, but that ain't it has made all the difference. Look you now at that knight in armor, he is one of the ancient times, and his sins were big enough even for our days, Andrew. And only that he repented just in time, and made what amends he could for his plunderings, and his burnings, and his robberies, he would be this night outside with those miserable revellers."

"O, I see," said Andrew, "his power and his riches have made him a heavy debtor. It would have been better for him to have been poor like you and me."

"Listen," continued the verger. "He did every thing he could to repair his faults when God gave him grace to repent. But his time, you see, was short. He couldn't find out all that he had injured. He had made for himself a large estate by oppressions and frauds upon his neighbors; it was no easy matter to split it up again, and to give to each one his own; not to mention that many had gone away never to return, and others had died, and their families perished and been forgotten."

"Then," said Andrew, "why did he not make restitution to the poor and to God's Church? I have always learned that that is what should be done, when the rightful owners cannot be found."

"As for that he did his best, Andrew. But still, after all,

he had much to pay. For he had wronged God as well as man. He had robbed Him of his honor himself, he had given scandal to others both by his provocations and by his bad example, where he ought to have been a guide to goodness; so when the short time allowed to him was over, and after he had done everything in his power, there still remained much for him to pay, both to God and man."

"Yes, yes," cried Andrew, more sorrowfully than ever, "God is truly merciful and just. It was merciful in Him to accept the repentance of such a man at all; but then He has been just too, for He has required three hundred years of punishment."

"After all," resumed the old verger, "his long stay amongst us is not entirely his own fault."

"How so?" asked Andrew; "who is to blame then? surely not God, for you told me how just He is."

"Wait a bit, and I'll explain it to you," was the reply, "and perhaps then you'll understand what I see has puzzled you, why people now-a-days get so slowly through Purgatory. It isn't entirely their own fault neither. You see that tomb there, with the monks around it praying, that tells you something of what he did to help him to pay the debts which he owed to God."

"He made rich gifts to the chapel there, and left money for a priest to offer up a mass every day for his own soul and all the souls in purgatory. He gave great moneys to the poor also, and ordered that every poor person that came to his funeral, should have a cloak and a dole of bread and meat; and so you may guess that his was a funeral worth talking of. For his sudden conversion was noised abroad, the more so as before so many had suffered from his cruelty and his hard-heartedness. So people came flocking from all sides, some for curiosity, but most to pray for his soul; for they knew that he would have much need of prayers. And of these some came in gratitude, because they had received back part at least of what he had taken from them; some came for the warm cloak and doles for the poor, but more from pure Christian charity, because they had been taught that it was good to pray for the dead."

"Seldom even in those days, had such a procession been seen as that which wound through the valley from the hill over yonder, where stood his castle, to the church. There was an almost endless train of poor men and women, all carrying lighted tapers and wearing the cloaks that had been given them; there were the bareheaded monks of more than one monastery with their processional crosses and lamps; there were the parish priests and curates for miles around, all in long white surplices, and each with his goodly torch of wax; and the retainers, and friends, and mourners that followed, were too many to be reckoned. And as they wound along through the lanes, and across the green fields, and up the path to the church-yard, the murmur of their prayers and the sound of the chanting, as it rose from the lengthened line, seemed to float up to the clouds as if determined to obtain some mercy. And without a doubt it did obtain some mercy for him and some relief; and if all his designs had been carried out in the same spirit, and with the same fidelity, he would long since have passed in there," and he pointed with his finger towards the glowing chancel. Andrew was too much absorbed in the history of the black knight to observe the gesture, so he only asked the verger to proceed.

"He left in his will," the old man went on, "directions for the building of twelve alms-houses, and funds for the support of twelve poor men, in honour of the twelve poor fishermen whom our Lord chose for his apostles. He would have built the houses himself before he died, if time had been allowed him. He ordered one of his memoirs to be given to a community of Cistercian monks, and a monastery to be built. You know the spot, Andrew, it is called Monks' Farm even now. O, if it were existing still, I should not have been left dying by the way-side, nor would you have to go to the work-house. All this was punctually done by his heirs, for men in those days were afraid of interfering with the last wills of their relations, especially if they gave any thing to God's poor or His Church. And many a fervent prayer went up to heaven from those alms-houses, and that cloister for him who had built them for the

good of his poor soul. And if they had continued till now, such prayers would long ago have helped him into heaven."

"And it is because he built the monastery I suppose," said Andrew, "that those monks are placed round his tomb. How pious they look, even in the marble, but I never observed it before, they seem to be holding something broken in their hands."

"Ah," sighed the verger, "it used to be their rosary, but these, like their prayers, are wanting now; and it would have seemed a mockery to restore them, when that of which they are emblems is passed away. In the days of which we are speaking, all England was, as it were, one great rosary; its villages and hamlets were like so many little beads, its cities with their cathedrals and monasteries were the greater ones, and they were all bound together by the communion of saints. But it is broken to pieces now, like those that used to be in those marble hands, and that poor knight and all of us are the sufferers."

"It was the Reformation, as it is called, I suppose, that did all this," answered Andrew.

"Yes," his companion answered. "And it was not long after the poor knight was dead that it began. The little monastery was one of the first to be seized on by king Harry the Spoiler; the alms-houses followed in the next reign; then the daily mass in the Lady chapel was abolished as superstitious, and the knight has been left ever since to pray for himself, as you see him, one night in the year and to suffer every other day and night, till he had paid the long debt that he owes to his master. Nor is his a solitary case; there is more than one here, and many elsewhere, who would long since have gone from among us, if the institutions of the old times had not been swept away, and their funds put into the pockets of those who care more for the living than the dead."

"But how is it," asked Andrew, in some astonishment, "that you know all these things so pat, and can talk about them so finely? You were only a miserable beggar, and have only just come in here you say, where have you of a sudden got all your learning?"

"I told you before," was the reply, "that we are allowed to know many things whilst we are here, whether they be past or present, especially what affects our own interests. But this, though it may seem a privilege, often only increases our sufferings; and in my own case, I must confess most justly."

"How so?" Andrew inquired.

"Why, you see, when I was in life I was rather given to grumbling, a fault which in truth is too common with us poor folk. Most of the sins for which I am now in Purgatory have arisen from this failing, and very probably a part of my punishment consists in having these motives for grumbling constantly before me."

"Ah," said Andrew, "just as I have heard it sometimes said, those who are so fond of grumbling, ought to have something to grumble for."

"Precisely so," replied the verger. "And so now I feel all the trouble and vexation, if I may say so, that would arise from knowing these things if I were still alive on earth; but still I am not really vexed at them, you will understand; I know too well the value of resignation now to do that even if I could; but yet I suffer as much as if I were as vexed as I used to be."

"Well, but," argued Andrew, "even so I don't see how the recollection of such a funeral as you have described can afflict you; for my part, it delights me to think of it. How can it at all affect you now?"

"How?" the old man somewhat sharply asked; "by the contrast of the things that were with the things that are. Such a funeral as that was a common gain to all the souls in Purgatory, but especially to those lying in the church-yard through which the procession passed. The prayers that were said, the psalms that were chanted, were not intended merely for him who was being carried to the tomb, but for all who rested beneath the sod. But who ever heard of such a funeral now? or what good is a modern funeral to any one but the under-

taker? Instead of cloaks for the poor, there are gloves, and silk scarfs and hat-bands for the rich—instead of doles, a feast for the relations—instead of prayers, common-place condolences, too often laughter, and even riot and debauchery. O! the many footsteps of a procession of old, slowly pacing through the church-yard were beautiful, for you know it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, of them that bring glad tidings of good things;" (Rom. x. 15.) Their sound was truly like glad tidings whispered through the regions of the dead. But the measured tread of a modern funeral falls dull and heavy on the soil, and finds no responsive echo in the hearts of the sleepers.

"Now-a-days they carry us to the grave without a cross to guide our way, or a torch to light us on our dreary path; all is cold and meaningless, and dark, and gloomy. Aye, and Catholics too, though they profess to believe in Purgatory, are little if any better than the rest. They place us in unconsecrated mould, without a blessing, without a prayer, because it is too far to go to a Catholic burial ground, or because in the Protestant one there is some other mouldering carcass to which we were once supposed to be related. Perhaps they put up an unsightly tombstone, and think they have done wonders, if they carve a cross upon it, or add at the bottom three letters signifying a wish that we may rest in peace. But there they stop, and we may rest in peace for them, for they will trouble themselves no farther about us.

"If any come to the church-yard now, it is to saunter about in idleness, or to find out which is the oldest grave-stone, or to read the doggerel rhymes that have taken the place of the good old charitable inscriptions; and if they chance to light upon one where they see a cross, they say 'O, he was a Catholic,' they see the words at the foot begging for peace for the weary soul, but even in repeating them they mean not to pray; they forget that in the grave below, there is probably a brother or a sister who needs their aid, and who cries out to them by the only emblem which at one time a persecuting age permitted to them, 'have pity on me, at least you my friends.' Grave-stones, and tombs, and monuments, were not intended to be merely ornaments, or memorials of mortality, or the trumpeters of pride, but they should be humble suppliants for prayer, and such they were once; but who, even among Catholics, looks on them as such now? who, when he reads the epitaph of a brother in the faith, ever thinks of uttering a *De profundis*, or a single *Pater Noster* for the welfare of his soul?"

"I understand it now," said Andrew. "This is why modern Catholics get so much slower through purgatory than those of old—and why so few—why, I do believe not one of the bonnets and hats of my days, have as yet got beyond the first pillar."

"You were not altogether wrong, then, you see," the verger went on, "in attributing this to the negligence and coldness of modern Catholics. They are truly cold. Their faith in Purgatory is cold, and so they do little in life to escape it themselves; Their charity is still colder, and so they altogether forget and neglect us, their poor brethren, who are already suffering there. How often do you think is Father Peter asked to say a Mass for the souls in Purgatory? I'll be bound the alms he receives for this charitable work in a year, would barely furnish him with a week's subsistence; and probably if all that has ever been given him for it was put together, it wouldn't buy a new black vestment for him.

"Just look at those two chapels of our Blessed Lady and St. Edmund; they were built and endowed in times gone by, that Masses might be offered up daily for the souls of the founders and their families, and for all suffering souls; and there were alms, too, and clothes to be given away at stated days to the poor, for them to pray for the same pious end. Formerly no one ever thought of passing through a church-yard without stopping to kneel before the cross to say a prayer for those who lay around it; no one ever entered a church and went out unmindful of the dead—but now, though a man's own father, or mother, or brother, or sister, or wife, or child, lie beneath the

they had none), all the demesnes of the late earl passed to the next male heir, and who *that* was would be a case for the lawyers. Mr. Wigram, of course, was disappointed; but the will was clear, and the executors knew their business.

"The next male heir!" exclaimed Mr. Edwards. "It will take a lifetime to trace out the pedigree!"

"Not quite so long as you think," said Sir John; "I believe it is not so very long since the heir of Oakham has been within these very walls."

"Not Grant! exclaimed my father; "no, not possible!"

"Ay, not only possible, but most certain," said Sir John; "William Grant Carstairs, only son of Lord Carstairs, and grandson of the old Duke of Leven. His father never took the ducal title, and even dropped that of Carstairs when he settled in Australia; but I have undisputable proof that Mr. Grant, of Glenleven, was really the man; indeed it was well known in the colony, when I was governor. Carstairs died about a year ago, and his son, this William Grant Carstairs, is really Duke of Leven. He came to England to pay off the last remnants of his grandfather's debts, and as he could not do this without putting himself in communication with the Commission of Creditors, of which I am chairman, I became acquainted with his real name and history."

"Then Mary was right," I muttered to myself, while Sir John continued:

"We shall place the necessary evidence of these facts before the right tribunals, and, meanwhile, Mr. Grant must be communicated with."

"He leaves England in a fortnight," said my father.

"He will do no such thing," said Sir John. "It will be a case for the lords, and he will, no doubt, have a subpoena to appear and give evidence."

It all happened as he said; there was no difficulty about the proofs of identity, for there had never been any concealment of the fact, and every one in Queensland knew well enough who "Grant of Glenleven" really was, and why he chose to drop the family name and ducal title. Then as to the heirship, that was equally plain. There were but the two male branches of the family, of both of which Grant was now the sole surviving representative. When all this had been sifted and proved, and every legal form gone through which could be demanded by the House of Peers or Doctor's Commons, then, and not till then, did Grant consent to appear at Oakham, and receive from the executors of the late earl all that was necessary to constitute him its master. It took more than a year to constitute all this, and when at last the day was fixed for the new duke to take possession, not Oakham only, but the entire county prepared to give him a worthy reception. I had my share of the law business, and went down to assist my father in the heavy work which the occasion brought on him. I shall not easily forget it. All the gentlemen of the county had assembled there, lords and baronets; but I need not give a list. There were triumphal arches and processions of school children, and the Exborough Volunteers, and a dozen carriages to meet him at the station. I remembered how at that same station he had stood alone a year before, looking in vain for some one to carry his bag to the White Lion; I remembered that, as I saw him now step on to the platform, and shake hands with the Marquis of Exborough, and when I heard the loud cheers that greeted him. How the bells rang out as the array of carriages drove through the village! What a bright gala day it was! The old family restored to Oakham, the old property given back to the eighth Duke of Leven.

But I don't intend to dwell on all this further. When the fuss of the grand reception was over, he sent for me to come to him. "Aubrey," he said, "what is to be done about the Australian business? Harry keeps on pressing for some one to go out. Can you find me anywhere an honest man with a clear head, and I'll engage he shall make his fortune."

I thought, and I hesitated.

"Will you go yourself?" he said, at last. "Mind, I don't ask you to go; but if you decide on accepting the post, I believe you will not regret it."

I consulted my father, and he urged me to accept the offer. There did not seem much chance of making my fortune by English law, and so, to make a long story short, before Christmas I left England, whither, as things turned out, I did not return for ten long years that were full of changes.

I have no intention, dear reader, of troubling you with my personal history during that eventful period. It was a busy part of my life, and the duke was right in saying that I should not regret it. My concern just now is to tell you my friend's story, and not my own; and my ten years in Queensland were certainly not without their utility in advancing his interests. I won't bind myself to say to a shilling the sum which I sent over to England as the produce of his gold fields at Glenleven, but Harry Gibson had not been far wrong in calculating their value at millions. If any one will bear in mind the fact (which is a fact) that in those ten years the produce of gold in this one colony exceeded £104,000,000, they will easily understand what must have been the value of a single property which extended over some thousands of acres; for when Lord Carstairs first settled in the colony, an enormous tract of sheep-feeding land could be bought for a comparative trifle.

My own interests, of course, were not forgotten; the duke's terms were more than liberal; and, when the whole estate had been finally disposed of, I was able to return to England a wealthy man. One commission, entrusted to me by the duke, spoke well for his heart; it was the removal to England of his parents' remains, which had been laid to rest in the little cemetery of Ballarat.

Yet I own there were some things in my home correspondence which gave me a secret anxiety. Much was said in praise of the new duke, of his generosity, his manly principles, his care for his property and his tenants; but expressions were now and then dropped which showed me he had the character of being eccentric. I was sorry for this, though not much surprised; in my brief intercourse with him in former years it was impossible to deny that his originality looked in that direction. What did surprise me much more was that, judging by his own letters, far from despising money, he seemed to care for it a good deal. He took his millions from Australia with a very good grace, and made no objection to the proposals I submitted, whereby a larger revenue could be raised from the property. And after all, I sometimes said to myself, this is but natural. Men theorize on gold and like to call it dirt, so long as their hands are clear of it; but let them feel its magic touch and the dirt becomes marvelously pleasant. Leven desires to get as much as he justly can from his property, and so do I, and so does everybody. And yet the sigh with which I closed my meditations showed me that my imagination had painted the "Grant" of former days as something higher and more unselfish in his aims than "everybody."

There was another thing that struck me as odd. A year or two after I came to Glenleven I became a Catholic. I had never thought much of these subjects in early youth; but many things which Grant had said had gone home; and the impressions first received from him were deepened in Australia. There, for the first time, I saw the Catholic religion at full work; I felt its mastery of souls, its reality as a Divine power, and to that power I submitted. It was only natural for me to imagine that the Catholic Duke of Leven would have been leader of his co-religionists in England. I had the English papers, Catholic and Protestant, sent out to me pretty regularly, and after my conversion I looked with some eagerness to see what part he took in parliamentary debates on questions affecting Catholic interests, education questions, workhouse questions, church-building questions, and the rest, I looked for his name, and I generally looked in vain. In my perhaps romantic imaginings about his probable course I had pictured him as the founder of benevolent institutions through the length and breadth of the kingdom; I thought he would acquire a distinguished name and achieve great things for the poor and the laboring classes; but if he did so, the papers, at any rate, had nothing to tell me about it. There is no denying, it was a disappointment, but I gradually grew used to regard the whole subject as one in

which the fancy of youth had cheated me with its wonted delusions; and who is there who reaches middle life who has not to look back at one thing or other as having been the slave of his imagination?

I returned, then, to England, spending a week or two in London before going down to Oakham, where my parents still lived; for though my father's age had obliged him to give up his post as steward into younger hands, the duke would not hear of his leaving the Grange. Mary had become the wife of Charles Oswald, a small squire of the neighbourhood, and was still able to be a good deal of comfort to her father and mother, and to find an ample sphere for all her capacities of usefulness. In returning to Oakham, therefore, I was still returning home, though I had formed no plans as to my own final settlement.

In London, I found plenty of old friends to welcome me, not, perhaps, the less kindly from the fact that rumor had credited me with having brought home an Australian fortune. Some of those whom I had left just entering on their profession, had fought their way to legal eminence, and some had earned their silken gowns and a certain share of reputation.

Sir Clinton Edwards, the brother of our Oakham vicar, was now a judge, and at his table I met a group of men more or less distinguished in the world of politics and of letters. The world has many phases, some more, and some less pleasant to come in contact with. A London dinner-room, filled with refined and intelligent people, who know everything and everybody worth knowing, is, no doubt, a very agreeable sample of polite society; but mark well this truth, dear reader, it is still the world, and anything higher and better than what savors of the world, you must not look to extract from its conversation. Sir Clinton had a fancy for well-mixed variety in his company, so on the present occasion I had the good fortune to meet a Solicitor-General, and a Home Secretary; the editor of a popular philosophic review (whose theology, by the way, was not predominantly Christian), two men of science, and a county member. Including our host and myself, we numbered eight. It is needless to say that our dinner was irreproachable. For the passing moment I found myself a lion; for the gayest and wittiest circles so soon exhaust the sources of their gaiety, that any person who, for one half hour, can stimulate a new curiosity, may calculate for exactly that space of time on enjoying a fair amount of popularity.

The conversation in such a circle was as graceful and varied as the forms in a kaleidoscope. Home politics, the state of the colonies, Hapirock's last pamphlet on the Council of Ephesus, the Vicar of Oakham's long promised, and recently published, work on Roman Antiquities, the last cartoon in *Punch*, and the University boat race, all passed in review, till for my sins I fell into the hands of the philosophic editor, who was, of course, profoundly ignorant of the creed of his next door neighbor. He was engaged on an article which aimed, I will not say at proving men to be well-developed monkeys, for I have never found that writers of this particular class ever aim at proving anything whatsoever, but at throwing out pleasant theories of the possible probability of their being nothing better. The intellectual inferiority of the Australian aborigines was the point on which I was subjected to cross-examination, and every fact elicited was bagged by my tormentor for future editorial purposes. But the county member who sat opposite charitably stepped in to my relief.

"I tell you what, Ford," he said, when he could get in a word, "you needn't go to Australia to look for intellectual inferiority; no, nor for savages either, nor for that matter for heathens; you'll find the whole stock-in-trade ready for inspection in a good many of our manufacturing towns, only nobody comes to inspect them."

"Very true," said Sir Clinton; "when I am Lord Chancellor, I shall introduce a bill for obliging all members of Parliament to spend one calendar month in a colliery district, say Bradford, for instance."

The familiar name struck on my ear and raised a host of recollections.

"Ah," said one of the men of science. "I've been down there

lately. You know the improvement of the mines is one of the duke's hobbies."

"And not merely mines, is it?" said the secretary; "I've heard a good deal of his work among the people."

"Just so," replied the scientific gentleman, "he's always at something; you know it would puzzle the calculating boy to number his hobbies; but the last thing has been the mines, and really his ideas about ventilation are very creditable."

"You are speaking, I presume, of the Duke of Leven?" I inquired.

"Ah, yes, you would have known him, of course, before going to Australia. Curious history his has been, certainly."

"He is really an excellent fellow," said Sir Clinton, "but not long for this world, I fear; I never saw a man so altered."

"Well, he is a very good fellow, of course," said the county member; "but he carries things too far, to my mind."

"How so?" I ventured to ask.

"Oh, I don't know exactly; lives the life of a hermit, which, in his position, is a mistake, and does mischief; and then he's always sporting some social view or other; setting himself a little against the current. One thing, you know, he's a Catholic."

"Yes," observed the second man of science, who till now had spoken but little, "it's a great pity that. Cuts a man of his standing so completely out of everything. He can't take his proper place in general society, parliament or anywhere."

"Well," began the editor, "of all the idiotic absurdities a man can be guilty of, I should say that was the primest. I declare it would justify a commission of lunacy."

"I'm afraid that's the real explanation of the whole thing," said the county member, looking sagacious, and touching his forehead; "there certainly is a touch in the top story."

"Touch or no touch," said Sir Clinton, "he has done wonders at Bradford. I know it by the results at the sessions."

"And may I ask what he has done?" said the editor, with the slightest possible tone of sarcasm.

"Changed the whole system of wages, shut up about twenty public-houses, and, really, I don't know how he has managed it, but they're not so brutalized by half since he's had the manor."

"And if I am rightly informed (you'll correct me, of course, if I am in error), but I understood he had brought over a lot of German monks and built them a monastery."

"Ah, yes," said Sir Clinton, "that's at Glenleven, on the moors, you know." Well, it's one of his crochets, and, perhaps, not the most sensible."

The secretary shook his head, and looked disgusted. "I know this, we shall have to put a stop to all that sort of thing some day," he said, "and the sooner the better, in my opinion."

Then the conversation, by an easy change, flowed into foreign politics, and I was left to digest all I had heard, and form my own conclusions. Was Leven really a little touched? Was he unpopular? Or was he dying? Had his ten years of boundless means produced as their whole result an improved system of wages and mine ventilation, and the building of a monastery? And did he fritter away his genius and his undoubted powers in a quick succession of profitless hobbies?

I should go down next day to Oakham and judge for myself.

CHAPTER VII.

RETURNING HOME.

My first week at Oakham was given to my family. I had to be introduced to my new brother-in-law, Oswald, who had brought Mary over from Exdale manor, that we might all be once more together. The duke had been called away to Scotland, and, to tell the truth, I was not sorry to have time and opportunity for rectifying my ideas on the new order of things before meeting him. My father praised him highly, for was he not a Leven? That single fact sufficed for him; nor would I have disturbed the simplicity of his loyalty to the representative of the old family.

out it, but with tenfold vividness and beauty. Life seemed to have been breathed into every thing. Even the material ornaments of the roof and walls, though retaining their forms as flowers and bosses, and letters and monograms, most unaccountably to Andrew, all seemed to live. The very colors glowed with a warmth and significance, as if they, too, were emanations of living spirits. Above, the ceiling was spread out like a sea of azure, full of motion, yet at rest; it was transparent, too, so that the eye could penetrate far, far into its inmost depths—yet beyond it nothing could be seen, save only a deeper, and deeper, and brighter, and more dazzling blue. The gaze seemed lost in its interminableness, but not fatigued; for it had, as it were, a voice that penetrated through the eyes even into the heart, to whisper there of a repose eternal, undisturbed. The golden stars scattered through the expanse, which, strangely, seemed to be the firmament, yet all the while bore the form of the old chancel roof, showed like eyes of celestial spirits, all bright and joyous. But if Andrew looked more intently on any one of them, it was still a star. So was it with every ornament; the bosses and the roses all around seemed to him to be cherub faces smiling on him, but if he fixed his eyes on any one amongst them, it was a carved flower still; and so on every side and in every direction, these beings of a higher sphere, brilliant yet undefined, were swarming; they seemed to hang in groups and clusters amid the tracery of the roof; to run like twinkling meteors along the beams and rafters, to sparkle amid the letters and emblems on the walls, to circle in glowing wreaths around the names of Jesus and Mary, and to be entwined together in the crowns above them—all, all was life. They mingled in the radiance of the golden coronas, and flitted hither and thither in the air like fire-flies in the dark of a quiet evening.

On either side of the chancel, carved stalls of ebony, and gold, and ivory, were ranged row beyond row, each upheld by angelic forms, rejoicing as it seemed, in the task assigned to them. But what a company occupied those radiant thrones! Were they men and women who had ever trod this earth? Is it possible that this gross flesh of ours can shine so bright, can put on such majestic beauty? They stood not, but floated softly just raised above the ground, each in his appointed place. Their robes, though made after the fashion of this earth, such, in fact, as they might be supposed to have worn in life, yet seemed worthy of kings and queens, yes, far richer and more graceful than had ever adorned king or queen on earth. Their countenances cast forth a radiance too dazzling for human eyes to look upon, unless preserved from blindness by some supernatural power, and a halo of golden amber played around their heads. Their bodies seemed to have lost all weight and substance, and all the grosser attributes of matter, for though every lineament of their faces, and every fold of their garments, and the colors and patterns woven into them were clear and distinct, yet withal they were quite transparent, so that through them the tracery of their stalls and all the beauties of each receding range of saintly figures were perfectly visible. Yet was there no confusion, no mingling of objects into each other, but the eye without difficulty separated them and gave to each one his place and attribute. Above them, poised in air, were angels clothed in flowing robes of the purest white, supporting over their heads what at one moment appeared to be fretted canopies of burnished gold, and the next crowns in which were combined the tints and all the brilliancy of the pearl, and the emerald, and the ruby, and the sapphire, and the diamond.

As soon as the first surprise occasioned by the burst of this unlooked-for vision had a little subsided, Andrew turned to look for the old verger, but he found that the mist which had hitherto obstructed his view of the sanctuary was now behind him, hiding from his sight the nave and its congregation. And he now also for the first time perceived two angelic figures, one on each side of the chancel door, who stood with swords of flame in their hands, as if to guard the entrance.

They smiled benignly on him when they saw that he had observed them and motioned to him that he must advance no further, but kneel down there upon the threshold, and at the

same time they pointed towards the high altar. He sank down instantly on his knees, and looked in the direction indicated by the gesture, but it was some minutes before he could comprehend what he saw.

The altar was prepared as he thought for Mass, yet it seemed to him that some church office had just been concluded, of which the "Amen" that he had heard was probably the close. The candles were all lighted, the Missal lay open on the epistle side, and it was evident the saintly congregation were awaiting the approach of the ministers. Andrew understood also at once that the Mass about to commence was for the dead; for before the altar was a frontal of black velvet embroidered in gold, and richly brocaded curtains of the same color and material hung on either side. Behind it, covering the reredos and the great east window up to the very roof was suspended a pall, likewise of black velvet, with a huge crimson cross upon it inscribed in golden letters, with verses from the "*De Profundis*," and other prayers for the dead.

But what puzzled Andrew was, that those sombre ornaments though they covered, did not conceal the glories of the altar, or of the reredos, or of the gorgeous window behind, for they seemed in some strange manner to be transparent, so that through them the sculptured and jewelled altar front, and the canopied reredos blazing with precious stones, showed forth in all their magnificence; and though the light within the chancel was brighter than a summer day, there seemed to be a yet more intense light without, for the tracery and the colors of the window, notwithstanding the sable veil before it, were as distinct and vivid as if the morning sun had just cast its first beams upon it.

But Andrew had not the time, even had he been able, to unravel this mystery; for a door, now for the first time observed by him, was opened towards the middle of the sanctuary, and forth there came a procession of sainted men, if possible more lovely to look upon, than those who occupied the ivory stalls.

First came the thurifer, followed by the candle bearers and a long train of acolytes, all youthful forms, who seemed to have been conveyed to heaven, whilst their souls, unsoiled by earthly contaminations, were pure and spotless as the white surplices they wore; then sub-deacon and deacon, and one wearing a gorgeous cope, and last the priest, a venerable and stately old man, with looks of unconquered meekness, and his silvery hair glittering in the nimbus of glory around his head.

Andrew had never seen a High Mass, but he had learnt sufficient of it from description and pictures to know that such was the service about to commence, and to assign in his mind to each one of the ministers his proper rank. He looked on, therefore, with intense interest, and his old blood tingled with delight at the idea of being allowed to assist at this most august of Christian rites.

But he could not help remarking, that the vestments were of a fashion new to him, yet withal having a more antique look than those he had been accustomed to. They were much larger and more flowing, and they folded round the wearer's form far more gracefully than the stiffened chasubles he had seen Father Peter wear; and instead of a sprawling ill-formed cross the representation of Jesus crucified was beautifully depicted on it in rich and glowing needle-work.

Slowly and majestically did the procession move towards the altar steps, amid a fragrant cloud of incense, which seemed to Andrew's eyes to consist entirely of wreaths and prayers springing from the golden censer, and ascending up, and up, and up—quite through—and far—far beyond the farthest depths of the blue firmament above.

They ranged themselves at the lowest of the altar steps, and Andrew could see the priest raise his hand to his forehead, and was listening with almost painful earnestness for the sound of his voice, when a flood of harmony, it could be called by no other name, broke the deep silence that had hitherto reigned around him, and was poured into his ears from every part of that wide sanctuary. It was as if every one of the cherub faces which in thousands were clustered and flitting around him, and every one of those angel forms that at once upheld and

adorned the gorgeous roof, the stalls and canopies, aye, and every one of those beaming stars above, sent forth their voices in unison with that sainted congregation at whose devotions they were assisting.

Slow and solemn was the strain and plaintive, breathing at once of hopes deferred, and of earnest and trustful prayer, embodying together, as it were, the feelings of those two classes of God's saints, whom Andrew had this night been permitted to behold; the one suffering, assembled there behind him in the nave, the other triumphing, yet full of sympathy for their less fortunate brethren, and therefore met together in the chancel before him to intercede for them. Now it was as the voice of one pleading his cause with tears, and bowing down to the very dust to sue for mercy, and now it was as the united efforts of thousands determined even to do violence to heaven, and clamorous before the throne of God, "that eternal rest might be given to the souls in prison, and perpetual light be made to shine upon them;"* and anon the full choros would burst forth joyously, as if its prayer was heard, for truly it was proper to raise up a hymn of jubilation in Sion, and to pay vows in Jerusalem, to Him who had heard the prayer of His children and granted their petition.†

Andrew listened as one in a trance. Every faculty seemed to be absorbed in the sense of hearing; and when at length the harmony suddenly took up another mode expressive of dismay and anguish, and the voices even of saints and angels grew tremulous, as they sung of "the day of wrath, that dreadful day," he bent down and pressed his hands over his eyes, as if at once to shut out the fearful images that rose up before him, and to exclude every sight that could mar the effect of the sublime strains that were searching into his very soul. And thus did he remain quite absorbed in that wondrous hymn, alternately terrified, and consoled, and filled with hope and love, as the deep meanings of its stirring words were infused into his soul by the changeful voices of that unearthly choir.

At length the chanters ceased, and Andrew raised his head to watch the ceremonies at the altar. He perceived that the deacon was just about to chant the gospel, and instinctively stood up to listen to it. He easily recognized the words, for it was the Gospel of the Mass for All Souls' Day which he knew was the account of the conversation between Jesus and Martha just before He raised her brother Lazarus from the tomb. But never had its meaning come so home to his heart as now. To hear those words of Jesus, "thy brother shall rise again, believest thou this?" and the reply of Martha, "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection of the last day," thus sung by lips that for ages, perhaps, had been mouldering in the grave; and to look at the same time at the shining bodies of so many who had believed in Jesus just risen from their tombs, did indeed give a force to the narrative of the Evangelist, that might well strike a far more tutored mind than his.

At the conclusion of the Gospel, there was a pause. Andrew had been told that this was the proper time for the sermon, but he could not imagine what instruction saints, already immersed in glory, such as the congregation before him, could want; so he stood wondering what new scene might be preparing.

But for a few minutes all was still, until he seemed to hear a voice, that came, he fancied, from one of the angels at his side, yet not from his lips, nor did it enter through his own ears, though it was clearly audible in his heart.

"Child of clay," it seemed to say, "hast thou not some request to make? Now is the proper time for it."

He was bewildered by the question, and began to ransack his memory to find out what he stood most in need of, when gradually the wish that he had uttered, of changing places with some one in the church-yard, came back to his mind. But so extravagant did it seem to be renewed here, that he hesitated whether to dare even to whisper it.

"Make haste, if thou hast aught to ask," the voice resumed, "or the ceremony will proceed."

"I had a wish," the old man now replied, "but I think it is worse than useless to speak of it here."

"Thou shalt see," was the rejoinder, and at a motion of the Seraph's hand, one of the occupants of the stalls gently glided from his place, and stood before the astonished and now trembling weaver.

He had the appearance of a man somewhat past the prime of life, and might have been thought toil-worn and emaciated, but for an inexpressible glow that seemed to radiate from his features, lending a charm to those wrinkles and deep marked furrows, that told of cares and labors long endured, and would have made a face less glorified painful to look upon. He was dressed in a coarse brown habit reaching to his feet, with a hood of the same material thrown back behind. A rough cord formed his girdle, and from it hung a rudely carved rosary, with its wooden cross and skull. His neck and feet were bare, the latter being protected only by leather sandals. His head too was uncovered, and entirely shaven round the crown. But his coarse habit and girdle, and rough formed sandals, everything in fact that he wore, though conveying an idea of the lowest poverty, seemed interwoven with threads of gold, and glittered as if powdered over with diamonds.

His arms were crossed upon his breast, his head bowed downwards, and his eyes cast upon the ground, and his countenance and whole demeanor spoke of such a deep humility and of such pure benevolence that old Andrew's heart leaped up into his throat for love of him as he gazed upon him.

"What would you with me, brother?" he began, seeing that Andrew was abashed and confused. His soft and winning voice quite reassured the old man, and he ventured to mention the wish of which he had already repented, adding "that he would not have thought of speaking of it here, only for the angel. For, of course, no one would be willing to exchange heaven for earth, when once he had got safe there." "Not so much a thing of course," the saint replied, "if a christian's soul can be saved thereby."

"But you wouldn't have me believe," asked Andrew, "that any one would give up such bliss as yours to come again to earth, even for the salvation of a thousand souls?"

"It has been done," was the reply, "by one whose bliss surpassed even that which the highest of the saints enjoys; and He has told us to learn of Him. Why should this lesson, of which He set us the example, be the only one left unpractised?"

Andrew fixed his eyes upon the speaker to see if he was really in earnest. But everything in that glowing countenance showed that what he said was from the heart, and that he was ready, if it were allowed him, to make a sacrifice such as this.

"But—is it possible!" faltered the old man; "would you—no I cannot believe it—I daren't ask the question."

"Would I, you mean to say," the holy man proceeded, "consent to exchange my lot for yours?"

Andrew scarce dared to express his assent, but the saint replied, as if to his thoughts: "Yes, willingly; if Jesus will permit, and your salvation can be secured thereby."

He cast his eyes for a moment up to the rood above, as if it were to ask to be allowed to forego the privileges of his glorified state for the sake of charity, and it seemed to Andrew, as if his look was responded to by a new and brighter flood of glory descending on his head.

But he was still incredulous. "Excuse me, sir," he began, "if I make bold to say, that either the world's mightily changed since your days, or else you don't know what poverty is, nor how poor and miserable I am."

"The world is and always has been much the same," was the reply, "as far as trials and crosses go. And as for poverty, look at my dress. Suppose it to be divested of the beauty which the goodness of Jesus has shed upon it, and then tell me, would not the poorest of your cottagers think it too coarse and thread-bare to be worn? It was my dress on earth, and is a good sample of everything that was about me."

* Requiem eternam dona eis Domine; et lux perpetua luceat eis.—Introit of Mass for the Dead.

† Te docet hymnus, Deus in Sion; et tibi reddetur votum in Jerusalem; exaudi orationem meam.—Ib.

"And would you then," again asked Andrew, "leave heaven and all this glory that is shining about you, to be again as poor as you were before?"

"Yes," was the triumphant reply, "if Jesus wills it, and there are souls to save," and again a ray of intense glory came down from above to play around his brow.

"Well," said Andrew, rather talking to himself than to the sainted man before him, "this beats all I have ever dreamed of. Why, here have I been wishing these forty or fifty years, to get rid of poverty, as the greatest of all evils; while a saint in heaven rejoices at having been poor, and likes it so well, that he has no objection to be poor again. I can't understand it. It may be that a man who has been poor once, and has got rich, may like to think and talk about it, though that ain't the way with all; but for him to want to be poor again! That gets over me. And were you always poor?" he asked abruptly.

For a moment the saint bowed his head even lower than before, as if unwilling to reply. But the angels seemed to whisper, "Do not hesitate! There is no fear of pride in heaven! In telling of thy virtues, thou dost but glorify Him who gave thee strength to do them."

Obedient to the suggestion, though still with some embarrassment, and in a lower tone, he answered, "It is not indeed expedient, but for your sake, I will confess, that I was not always poor. Indeed, I was nobly born and softly bred. I abounded in power and dignity. I had much gold and wide lands, and many men to wait upon me. But I heard the words of the wisest of teachers, 'if thou wilt be perfect, leave all and follow me.' I saw Him, though Lord of all things, choosing for Himself the lowest and poorest state; and, helped by His graces, I tried to do the like: and I found more happiness in poverty and humiliation, than I had ever done in riches and in honor. What I did then, if such be His will, I am ready to do again."

Andrew gazed at him in still greater astonishment. He was almost at his wit's end for something else to say, yet he could not altogether get over his incredulity. Of a sudden a new thought seemed to strike him, for he exclaimed, "But, Sir, excuse me if I make too free, but I think you mistake the thing. You may, perhaps as you say, have been happier in poverty than you were before in riches, though I don't quite understand even that. But, you can't fancy that you would be happier if you were as poor as I am, than you now are in heaven."

"It was not," he replied, "because I thought that I should be happier, that I chose poverty, though afterwards I found such to be the reward of my choice. No! I only wished the more perfectly to follow Jesus, and so, at some future time when He should appoint, to possess real happiness. And now, if I were permitted to return to earth, I should not look to be happier than I am at present; but it is the love of Him whom now I know even as I am known, makes me willing again to take upon myself that humble state which He so loved, that I may be thus more and more like Him in His abjection. For now I know—the experience of centuries has taught it to me—that the more we resemble Him on earth, the nearer do we approach to Him in Heaven; and every privation we endure for the love of Him, and every year, or day, or hour we pass in pain or poverty for the love of Him, is requited by our overwhelming increase of glory. I know what He has given me for the few years He permitted me to spend in my poor cell. Eternal thanks to Him for having let me count so many. If then He offer to me now more of these precious years, shall I not, both for the love of what He has loved, and that I may add fresh brightness to my everlasting crown, O! shall I not gladly embrace the opportunity?"

Andrew could not but feel affected by the fervor of these last words, still he was unwilling to give up his argument; and something which his saintly instructor had said, seemed to give him courage to proceed.

"I begin to understand something of your history now. I recollect having read about great and rich men, who have renounced their dignities and gone into a monastery. And as you mention your cell, I suppose you were one of these. I don't

say that it wasn't a great sacrifice; but I have always been told what a happy life, after all, is the monk's. And so I think it must be. To be shut out from the cares and temptations of the world; to have nothing to do all day long, but to serve God and say one's prayers; for any one who has a liking that way, I am sure there couldn't be anything more pleasant. At any rate it's very different from the workhouse, where I am to go to-morrow; I know, that, to escape it, I would go into the poorest monastery that ever was."

"You mistake, greatly brother," did the good monk reply, "if you fancy that the walls of a monastery can shut out care and temptation. There are enough of those to be met with everywhere. Still more do you mistake, if you suppose, that to the nobleman of my days, who was in reality the king of his neighborhood, it was any thing but a most serious sacrifice, to give up his liberty for the confinement and strict obedience of the cloister, his riches for its poverty, his pleasures for its austerities. Not that I wish you to believe, that in my own case the sacrifice cost much. Besides, the world often broke in upon our peacefulness, and bad men, who had the power often sought to despoil us of the little that was left to us, and to drive us from our cells, humble and wretched as they were. We too, on the other hand, had often to mingle with the world, to preach against its follies, and strive against its wickedness."

"O! you were a priest too, and a preacher were you?" said Andrew, interrupting him, "that would make the matter still easier. For priests are always honored; and have many a consolation in their ministry. How do not their people love and reverence them! How grateful to them are those whom they have converted. I know how I love Father Peter, and he has often said to me that my gratitude helped to repay him for the anxieties of his office. Perhaps he only said it to please me, but anyhow he must be happy to be so loved. Ah! believe me, Sir, such a life as this is very different from that of a poor man like me; again I say, it's very different to live as you did, in a monastery, and to have to go to a Union Workhouse. There were no Union Workhouses in your time, so you can't know what they are; if you did—if you had tried one, you wouldn't be so ready to give up your fine castle, much less heaven, to go into one. No, no, you little know what a Union Workhouse is."

"Be it what it may," answered the saint, "for the love of Jesus, and of the souls He died to save, I would encounter it."

"What," asked Andrew, "and be locked up, and not allowed to see any one of your friends, but once a week?"

"Yes! for I would remember that Jesus, with all His faculties about Him, was locked up for nine months in His mother's womb."

"Ah! but there's the bad food into the bargain, and little enough of it!"

"Not so nauseous still, I would think, as the gall and vinegar which He was forced to drink,"

"Well, then, the surly master and his brutal assistants!" urged Andrew.

"Not more surly or brutal surely than the Pharisees and their assistants, the executioners who nailed Him to the cross," was the reply.

"But there's such wicked company in the Workhouse," Andrew again said, "and they are so quarrelsome, and so fond of cursing and blaspheming."

"Not more so, I think," quietly rejoined the saint, "than were the servants of the High Priest, and the Roman soldiers, who struck Jesus on the face and head and quarrelled with Him for His very meekness, and called Him a blasphemer."

"But to seem to be deserted by every one," said Andrew, as a last resource, "aye, even by God. No friends to console or help one, no good priest to comfort one, no Mass, even on Sundays, no time for prayer, unless you would be scoffed at for ever by a lot of ignorant bigots, little chance of having the sacraments even at the hour of death. Ah! in your monastery, you had kind brothers ever ready to assist you; and the Blessed Sacrament always near you, and lots of spiritual blessings to console you; how would you bear with such a change?"

"I would try to recollect," replied the saint with more of solemnity and feeling than before, "Him who was deserted by all, even His most cherished friends; who was denied by the most favored of His apostles—nay, who complained, whilst He was hanging in the very agonies of death, that He was left to die without the consolations of His Father and His God."

"Well, I see I must give it up," said Andrew, still, however, hesitating. "I've got nothing else to say; I'm fairly beaten."

"Why not say convinced?" asked his saintly instructor, "convinced that these things, which you have hitherto looked upon as such evils, are, in reality blessings; which, if you know how to profit of them, shall one day shine like diamonds in your crown, as you see the very threads of my coarse habit shining now. Jesus has told you, that not one hair of your head shall fall to the ground, unmarked by your Heavenly Father; much less shall one care, or one pang, or one privation, however trifling or unimportant, if borne in patience for the love of Jesus, fail of its reward."

The saint paused for a moment, but Andrew was silent; he clearly had got no more to say, so his lovely monitor went on.

"Remember, too, that the greater the affliction that threatens you, the greater opportunity is there of heaping up treasure on treasure in heaven, so that by one month spent patiently in a workhouse, such as you have described, you may gain as much as by years spent in a monastery; especially, if, as you seem to suppose, there would be nothing there to disturb your peace. Yea, even the loss of spiritual consolations is not without its own peculiar recompense. For such loss, borne with patience and in obedience to the will of God, will have more merit in heaven, than any masses ever assisted at in the spirit of self-gratification. For obedience is, and ever has been, 'better than sacrifice.'"

It was at length plain that Andrew began to falter. He hung down his head and became more thoughtful, whilst the saint resumed:

"You just now spoke of the happiness of preaching to and converting sinners. There are great consolations in it. I have experienced them, and let me tell you, the hope of experiencing them again, has had some share in making me so willing, if heaven permits, to resume the office by exchanging with you."

Andrew could no longer keep silence. "Small chance of your doing that in the workhouse," he said; "you'd find few listeners there, even if the master didn't stop your mouth. They won't let any one but the church parson preach there."

"There is one mode of preaching," replied the saint, "which none can hinder and few resist, that of good example. Forbearance under injurious treatment, meekness towards all, and patient resignation in pain and suffering, would make converts even in a workhouse, and disarm the cruelty of the most hard-hearted master. And no one could hinder that."

"True, true! I see you're right," said Andrew. Then as if communing with himself, he went on, "It's very strange, I've always been grumbling and making myself miserable about my lot—aye, I was half inclined to quarrel with Father Peter yesterday, when he said, I might be worse off, and that if I have troubles, I have also advantages more than many others, and I laughed—that I did—when he told me many a one would be glad to change with me. Little then did I dream of what I've heard this night. Now I find there are millions who would be glad to make the exchange; the lost in hell, that they might have time for penance; the souls in purgatory, that they might get to heaven all the sooner and easier; and even the blessed in heaven—this is the strangest of all—that they might show their love of God more, and earn more merit and a higher reward. And then, only to think it, the very things I've been grumbling at are those that make them more anxious to get into my place. Well, well, I'd never have believed it, if I'd heard it in a sermon." He stopped, and the saint, who had listened with a complacent smile to the old man's reverie, resumed.

"What say you now, brother? Will you exchange with me? Will you give me the opportunities now in your power, of adding to this happiness which I enjoy, or will you keep them for yourself? Thereby, when God shall summon you from your place of trial to join us, to be placed on a brighter throne, and made more glorious than any that you see even here."

He raised his eyes as he spoke, and fixed them full on the countenance of Andrew. The glory that was poured forth from them, and his own tears which now began to run fast down the furrows of his cheeks, for a moment blinded the old man, and choked his utterance, but at length he spoke.

"If your eyes were as persuading when you used to preach hereabouts as they are now, I trow there were no discontented people to be found in our village. At least you've persuaded me so, I'll try to remember what you've told me when I'm in the workhouse, and that's likely to be to-morrow; and if I feel impatient, I'll just fancy I see you looking at me as you do now; and if that won't make me patient, I don't know what will."

"Rather think," said the holy monk, "that He who hangs there above us is looking at you; His eyes are brighter far, and carry in them more persuasion than mine, or those of all the saints, and cherubims, and seraphims united."

"I'll try then to think of both," said Andrew.

"Then you've made up your mind not to change."

"Yes," replied, Andrew, "I think I have."

"Then can I do anything further for you?" asked the saint.

"O, yes!" cried Andrew, sinking down on his knees before him, "give me your blessing now, and promise to pray often for me, that I may make as good a use of poverty and afflictions as you have done." The saint stood for a moment with eyes uplifted to the rood above as if in prayer, then stretching forth his hands over the old man he said:

"You have chosen well and wisely. May He, who to show his love of poverty, was born in a stable and died naked on a cross, bless you; may He confirm your choice, and make you every day more and more like unto Himself. May He strengthen you and support you, and console you, and teach you the secrets of that heavenly wisdom, which He so often conceals from the great and proud, but reveals to the little and lowly. Such, brother, is the blessing I wish you now; and thus will I pray for you every day and hour, until—and I trust I shall not have many prayers to offer up before the time shall come—until we meet here again."

He ceased, and folding his arms upon his breast, glided quietly to his place amid the golden stalls. The Mass at once proceeded, the ministers took their places at the altar, and the choir of saints and angels once more burst forth.

The strain had in it a more beseechful energy, if possible, than any which had preceded it, and Andrew could plainly recognize the words of the Offertory. "Lord Jesus Christ, King of Glory, deliver the souls of all the faithful departed from the flames of hell and from the deep pit. Deliver them from the lion's mouth, lest hell swallow them, lest they fall into darkness; and let the standard-bearer St. Michael bring them into Thy holy light, which Thou promisedst of old to Abraham and his posterity. We offer Thee, O Lord, a sacrifice of praise and prayer; accept them in behalf of the souls we commemorate this day, and let them pass from death to life, which Thou promisedst of old to Abraham and his posterity."

Andrew listened overwhelmed with emotion, but ere it was concluded, the voice of one of the angels seemed to speak in his interior. "Thou must retire, for thy errand here is ended. Until thou hast passed the gates of death, thou canst not be permitted further to behold the mysteries of this night."

Obedient to the intimation, the old man rose from his knees, sorrowful indeed at the disappointment, but resigned. As he raised his eyes to catch a last glimpse of the glories of the chancel, he found that the mist was again closing around him, and the altar, with the splendor that surrounded it, was already growing faint and indistinct, like some beautiful and glowing object seen in the distance.

He turned round to leave the place, when the music ceased, and at the same moment it appeared to him that a number of persons thrust their arms past him, as if eager to grasp some object outside the mist, and almost as instantaneously a form flitted by him into the chancel, which he fancied could be no other than Lady Esther. No sooner, therefore, could he again see the nave, than he looked for her in the place where she had knelt, and true enough, she was no longer there. Another had taken her place, however, and Andrew felt a gush of joy through his veins when he saw that it was the knight of the black marble tomb.

"I thought," he said to himself, "that the choir was singing those last words with more earnestness than ever, and now I see God could no longer refuse their prayer."

But he did not stop to look if there were any other changes in the nave, for he felt that the admonition of the angel applied to this part of the church, equally with the chancel. He had no business here, now that he had refused to change places with any of those who had come in before him. So he hastened as fast as he could towards the door, merely turning his head for a moment to take one more look at the great crucifix above the screen. It seemed to him more glorious and touching than ever. The wounds were flashing with a soft and soothing radiance, the countenance wore a benignant and encouraging smile, and the eyes were fixed upon him with an expression the same as that of the saintly monk, but ten-fold more moving and inspiring. Andrew's impulse was to cast himself on his knees and protest that that smile and that glance should cheer him through all the trials that awaited him, but he again recollected where he was, and turned to the western door.

There he found the friendly vergers with his hand on the massive lock ready to let him out. He looked as resigned, and old Andrew thought happier than before, for he smiled as he said to him, "There's no need asking you what you determined to do. Did'n't I tell you that you'd see here what would do you good? Try to make good use of it then."

As he spoke these words, Andrew had just stepped over the threshold, and he closed the door.

It was pitch dark, and the sudden transition from the intense light of the church, had a bewildering effect upon the old man; for he seemed to himself to stumble and to strike his head against some hard substance, and then he completely lost his recollection.

He was roused by a shake from no very gentle hand; and a rough voice at the same time called out, "What do you mean by lying here all night, you drunken vagabond?" He started up in terror. It was broad daylight, and by his side the sexton of the village was standing with his spade and mattock on his shoulder.

"What Andrew, you!" he exclaimed, as the old man turned his face towards him; "I had a better opinion of you than this, but I've found you out at last it seems. I saw you come tottering up the hill last night, and pitied you. I little thought you'd been to your old Popish priest for the sake of his ale. You must have been precious drunk. And only to think how you were thumping your head just now against the grave-stone there. Why you look daft man! Ain't you sober yet?"

Andrew felt nettled, and was going to reply sharply, when the recollection of the lessons he had heard came back to his mind, and he checked himself, and simply thanked the sexton for having waked him. His meekness was not without its reward, for the surly fellow was immediately softened and walked away, hoping that he had'n't taken cold by sleeping on the grass.

Andrew now sat up and began to collect his scattered thoughts; but it took him some time, for his head was aching violently, evidently from a bruise. He was sitting on the very grave where he had rested himself after his walk the preceding evening. The church-yard and everything about him looked precisely the same as they had ever done; the grave beneath was undisturbed, except that the grass and moss were flattened, as if he had lain there all the night.

Yet he could'n't bring himself to believe that all he had seen was only a dream. He examined more closely to see if there was any crack or crevice below the grass, but no, all was firm as if it had not been moved for years. He read the lines on the tomb-stone, but it bore rather a recent date, and there was no mention of an Alderman upon it. So for awhile he was sadly puzzled, till at length, he concluded that the lesson he had learnt was a good one, come how it might, and he resolved more-over to put it in immediate practice.

"So, here's to the Workhouse, since it is the will of God," he said, as with some difficulty he got up and hobbled away. Yet he did not forget the parting admonition of the old vergers, for before he had reached the wicket gate leading down to the village, he had offered up to heaven more than one fervent prayer for the souls in purgatory.

END.

THE TWO VICTORIES.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY AND APOLOGETIC—FATHER EUSTACE.

IT was a bitter night in the dreary month of November! "What an unromantic beginning!" we hear some young ardent reader exclaim; and we are bound to admit that it really does sound very prosaic and common-place. Sitting down to peruse some "romantic story of thrilling interest," our breath (of course we mean our intellectual breath), is usually taken away by the overpowering grandeur of the opening description. Gradually, however, we rally; and, collecting our scattered faculties, become able to devote them to the due appreciation of the treat spread out before us. Of course we expect to be entertained with labored descriptions, and astonished with romantic adventures. We should scarcely spend our money on "The Knight of the Iron Hand, or, a Romance of Blood," if we expected to find in it either truth or probability. Again, when we invest half-a-crown in Mrs. Mollop's celebrated book, "Father Crossbones, or the Confessor," are we at all astonished when we find that delicate and truthful writer displaying a much more intimate knowledge than we ourselves possess of the manner in which our families are governed by certain secret influences, etc.? or, are we in the least startled when we find her narrating a certain number of astounding incidents which take place every day in our households, but of which we, although living in the very midst of them, are in a state of the most profound ignorance? No, surely, we are neither startled nor astonished. It is all just as it ought to be. We do not look for truth. We do not even look for probability. We merely look for romance. We pay our money for the article, and it is supplied to us, and, consequently, we are not at all surprised when we find our book commencing with a thunder-storm rolling along the Alpine hills, threatening destruction to the dwellers in some secluded valley; and when, at the proper moment, our hero makes his appearance, we are quite prepared to welcome him as the very gentleman whom we expected to meet in such a situation. Or, we are equally ready to be transported in imagination to the abodes of wealth and luxury, and to be treated to an elaborate description of the gorgeous upholstery, the priceless paintings, and the eastern plants. We feel quite certain that, however much the circumstances may vary, we shall in due time be introduced to our hero, or our heroine, or to both, as the case may be. After their excellent qualities and perfections shall have been sufficiently expatiated upon, we know that we shall have the felicity of making the acquaintance of the smiling villain, or the stern old uncle, as the story may require, and that, after the usual amount of unmerited sufferings, thrilling incidents, and dramatic situations, the whole affair will conclude in the legitimate and recognized manner. The three volumes are made up and sent forth to seek their fortune. The publisher is satisfied if the book sells. The author is satisfied if the publisher has paid him. The public is satisfied if it obtains a sufficient amount of romance in return for its money, and is treated to the history of a certain number of events which could never by any possibility have happened; and thus, everybody being satisfied, there is an end of the matter, and the author sets to work again at "conception, concoction, and completion," as Sir Abel Handy would style it, of another work, at once as clever, as popular, and as probable as the last one.

And so, dear reader, if in this little book of ours we were about to give you some romantic story of thrilling interest, we admit that you would have reason to complain at our opening sentence. But, alas for romance! ours is but the repetition of

an old story, "an ower true tale." We have no romance, but the romance if you wish so to style it, of real life. We have no incidents to narrate but such as really happened, and, therefore, how unromantic soever you may think it, we must beg your leave to commence with no more ambitious preface than by repeating the very ordinary observation which stands at the beginning of this chapter, viz., that it was a bitter night in the dreary month of November. The streets of London (for it was in the modern Babylon that the events we are about to record occurred) were deep with mud, and as it was splashed by the passing vehicles over the stragglers who happened to be abroad, it impressed them with a very unpleasant conviction of its filthiness and its consistency; for not even the rain, which was driven upon them by a violent east wind, sufficed to remove it, or to wash away its stains. The city was enveloped in one vast cloud of damp and mist, through which the lamps shone with a strange, sepulchral glare; and his business must, indeed, have been urgent who was abroad on such a night. And yet there were many wanderers; many who were abroad on this bitter night because they had no home to shelter them, although they were surrounded by wealth and luxury on every side—many who glared with the eye of hunger and the scowl of fiercest hate on the equipage that, as it rolled by in all its luxury and gay appointments, drenched them with the mud which its wheels whirled aloft—many who knew not where to lay their aching heads, or how to satisfy the cravings of their gnawing hunger. But we digress, and must now beg our readers to accompany us to the snug little parlor of a rather mean-looking house, in a street leading from one of the great thoroughfares of the city. The fire was burning brightly in the grate, and the closed curtains and lighted lamp showed that it was arranged for the night. Its only occupant was an elderly man of grave, yet gentle and attractive appearance. His long white hair was combed back from a lofty forehead, full at once of intellect and benevolence; and as he listened to the howling of the storm without, the expression of his countenance revealed that his thoughts were with the homeless and the wanderer. His dress, and the various articles that were scattered about this room, at once proclaimed him a Catholic priest. It was, indeed, Father Eustace, the venerable priest who had charge of the numerous congregation attached to the chapel which he served. He had grown grey in the service of the poorest of the poor. Day and night he had worked amongst them, elevating them by the example of his own virtues, encouraging the weak, and reproving the wicked and the thoughtless; ever at his post, regardless alike of the scorching fever or the deadly cramps of cholera provided one of his flock was to be succored or prepared for death—prepared as the Catholic priest alone knows how to prepare the trembling soul for its awful change: elevating their poverty as far as his own scanty means allowed, and sharing his little all with those who stood most in need of it. Thus, living amongst them, at once their father, their guide, and their dearest friend, his poor and struggling congregation had, indeed, become to him father and mother, and brother and sister, and all the world besides. Loving them as he did, it is little wonder that, as the storm howled without, he ever and anon rose from the chair where he was resting after the labors of a long and fatiguing day, and opening the curtains, peered out long and anxiously into the gloom outside—less wonder still that the murmured "God help them" rose so frequently to his lips, as he thought of the suffering and the poverty which were the lot of so many of his flock. His simple tea stood untasted on the table by his side. There was an air of sadness and anxiety about him, which seemed at variance with his mild and benevolent face. His

book had fallen from his hand and was lying unheeded on the carpet at his feet. After his last visit to the window, he sat so quiet and still, that, but for the sigh which every now and then escaped him, and the tear which a close observer might have discovered coursing down his cheek, we might have supposed that, overcome by the fatigues of the day, he had fallen off into a gentle slumber.

He had sat thus some half-an-hour, when a sudden ringing of the bell recalled him to himself, and told him, but too plainly, that his labors were not yet over.

Now, naturally speaking, it is not a pleasant thing, after a day of hard and laborious work, to be called out again into the cold damp streets just as you have settled yourself down for a comfortable night with some favorite author. Under such circumstances the most general answer, which the unwelcome messenger would receive, would be a decided "Not at home." But not so with Father Eustace. He was the father of the poor. He was their servant, and ever at their beck, and, therefore, the book was at once laid aside, and before his aged servant knocked at the door of his room, he was already preparing for the "call" which he knew full well awaited him.

"Well, Margaret, another call to-night. What is the matter now?"

"Oh sir, poor Mr. Stanhope is sinking fast, and he would like to see you again before he dies, if you would kindly visit him."

"Poor, poor fellow," involuntarily murmured the priest, as a tear slowly trickled down his cheek. "Beati qui in Domino moriuntur," "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord," he continued, in a low voice, as if unconscious of the presence of his servant. Then turning to her, he said, "Say that I will be with him in a few moments. And, Margaret," he added "don't forget to say your beads for him, for his death-bed though blessed in the sight of God, is but lonely and desolate as far as this world is concerned."

"Oh! many, many is the Rosary I have said for him, poor suffering child," answered the old woman, weeping, as she spoke, "and although he little needs the prayers of such as I, still I shan't forget him now, when he is passing away from this world of trouble, to receive his reward for all that he has suffered here."

By this time the priest had completed his hasty preparations, and passing for a moment into the chapel which adjoined his house, he took from their repository the holy oils with which the priests of the Church are ordered to anoint the sick in the name of the Lord (St. James, v. 14, 15), and then opening the door of the tabernacle, where the love of the "Adorable" keeps him, night and day, waiting with anxious longing to minister to those for whom He has done and suffered so much, he took from it the Most High, in order to administer the Viaticum to the dying man, and carefully placing It in his bosom, in a moment more he was in the cold wet street, struggling with the blustering wind as he hurried on his way.

Out in the cold dark night, hurrying through the searching wet and mud, bending his head towards the earth to shield his face from the driving rain, with It in his bosom—and yet there is no light to accompany It—there is no bell to tell of Its approach—there is no hymn—no prayer, but what is uttered by the priest as he hurries on. The passengers, as they brush past him in the street, know not that they stand in the very presence of their God, but hasten by, all unconscious of the mystery of love and sacrifice. Oh! for the days gone by—the good old times—when the priest of God would not have had to pass along with It within his bosom and none to pay It homage; but when blazing lights, and sounding bells would have told the dying man that the pledge of his redemption was already coming to him—that the Adorable was near at hand to waft his trembling soul to the home of its eternity—when from every house along the way would worshippers have come forth to swell the grateful train that was but too blest in being permitted to accompany Him on His journey of love. Oh! for the good old times, when, when will ye return—when shall

for coldness and neglect, and the victim of love be no longer left to bewail the base ingratitude of those whom He came to save?

But whilst Father Eustace is hurrying on as fast as the violence of the storm will permit him, we will take the opportunity of introducing our readers to some of the other personages who will figure in this story of real life.

CHAPTER II.

INTRODUCES MR. STANHOPE, A LONDON MERCHANT.—LOVE AND PRIDE.

MR. STANHOPE was a London merchant of great wealth and influence. When comparatively a young man he had been left a widower, with two children, a boy, named Edwin, and a girl, named Maria. He was a stern, hard man; possessing to all appearance, but few of the gentler and better feelings of our nature. In all matters, whether appertaining to his business or to the management of his large and magnificent mansion, he was a perfect model of exactness and precision. His calm, cold, self-possession was never for a moment disturbed, and wherever he went he spread around him an atmosphere of chilling coldness, which was at once so painful and so apparent that few sought to mingle with him in those more familiar relations which are so dear to most of us. His will was inflexible, and woe to the clerk in his house of business, or to the domestic in his mansion, who dared to question it. For years he had reigned (so to speak) with absolute sway in his own sphere, and the self-will which naturally formed so prominent a part in his nature, had become so strongly developed by the unreserved submission of all about him, that he himself was scarcely aware of the fearful strength which this unrestrained passion had acquired in him. Cold, haughty, passionless, as he seemed to be, there was, however, one tender feeling within his breast, and that was an ardent love for his children. The only times his haughty brow relaxed were when his children climbed his knee, or hung around his neck in all the trusting confidence of childhood. At such times he would smile, and kissing them, try to speak to them with love and tenderness; but it was a failure, and he felt it so. The words fell strangely from his lips; the cold, stern man was too much frozen to melt so easily, and putting them gently away, he would often sigh heavily and bitterly as the conviction forced itself upon him, that he could not be tender; and whilst they, timidly withdrawing from him into a distant part of the room, would amuse themselves, but always quietly, and with an unnatural fear of disturbing him, his brow would grow darker and darker, his lips would become more and more tightly compressed, as he gazed upon them, the bitter conviction all the while burying itself deeper and deeper in his heart, that his own children were afraid of him; and yet, how he loved them! They were the only objects in the world for which he cared. Men said he cared for gold, because they saw him so exact in his attention to the business transacted by the house of which he was the head; but they did not know him. He was concerned for the prosperity of his house, and watched over it with the utmost care and exactness; but it was not so much on account of the immense wealth it laid at his feet, as because it was *his*, because *his* name was mixed up with it, because it was a part of *his* importance and standing amongst men. The mere gold he despised, and he would sign the papers transferring thousands of pounds with a kind of refined disdain which it would be difficult to analyze. He used it, he disposed of it, he scattered it about; but he never seemed to forget that it was as the fruit of *his* intellect, the offspring of *his* calculations, and of the unbending power of *his* will; in a word, he loved and esteemed it, inasmuch as he could see that he owed its possession to himself—for itself, he despised it.

Such was Mr. Stanhope, a cold, stern man, with but one tender feeling at all strong within him, and even that one almost crushed by the freezing influence of his pride and

nature towards his children; and yet pride conquered even that, and he felt ashamed to show it. Often, often, during the day, amidst the distractions of business, his thoughts wandered away to his home and his children; and he would long for the moment when he could turn his steps homewards. Yet, when the time came, and he was at liberty, as he approached his home his pace would often become slower and slower, and the dark, haughty face would grow darker still, and the contracting brow would show that a bitter thought was feeding on his heart. And, in truth, it was so; for, he felt and knew his presence would throw a dark shadow over his home, and that his children would be less free and less happy because he was there. He felt—and, oh! how bitterly—that they feared almost as much as they loved him; and, writhing under the bitter pangs which such thoughts awakened, the gloomy face would pass into its home, and the dark shadow would fall for the rest of the day upon the domestic hearth; and the hours that had been so anxiously looked forward to would come laden with bitter disappointment, because they taught him more and more plainly still, that he knew not how to make others love him—that there was no heart in the world that beat entirely in unison with his own.

Many, perchance, will think this picture overdrawn; but, in very truth, there are too many such men as the one whom we have endeavored to sketch,—men who have allowed pride and self-will to extinguish all the better feelings of their nature; and who, made to love and be loved, are tyrants, even where all should be love and gentleness, at the domestic hearth.

Reader, have you never met a Mr. Stanhope? If you have not, either the circle of your acquaintance has been very limited, or you have been especially fortunate. If you have, and still more, if you have met him in the family circle, and in social intercourse, you will recognize the character, and will be able to join your testimony to ours, that such an acquaintance is not at all conducive either to the comfort or the happiness of those amongst whom his lot may be cast.

CHAPTER III.

BROTHER AND SISTER.

WE have already mentioned that Mr. Stanhope had two children. Two years before the stormy night on which the incident related in the beginning of this story occurred, the boy was a fine manly fellow of seventeen, his sister being two years younger. Mr. Stanhope had never been able to bring himself to part with his children, and, consequently, they had been educated under his own roof by the most eminent professors whom wealth could procure. This peculiar training had, of course, been attended with the effects naturally to be expected from such a method of education. They were retiring and bashful, almost to a fault, and like all others brought within its influence, almost living on the will of their father. Fearing their father almost more than they loved him, and having no mother on whom to lavish their affection, it is not surprising that they loved one another most deeply and tenderly. They were children on whom a parent's eye might well rest with pride. Edwin, at the age of seventeen, was a fine manly fellow, as we have remarked; but there was something in the fire of the dark black eye, and in the shape of the thin delicately-moulded lips, which reminded one of Mr. Stanhope; and it was but too evident that there was much of the father's nature reflected in that of the son. Intellect was stamped on the swelling forehead, but pride was there too; and those who knew them best hoped that father and son might never be brought into collision, or cause of disagreement spring up between them. Such natures may break, they seldom bend. There was all the freshness of early youth about Edwin at the age when, now-a-days, the boy is swallowed up in the embryo man; and on the slightest cause the blood would rush into his face, and his open countenance would be covered with burning blushes. The secluded life he had led since infancy had produced, or rather, strongly developed, the romantic in his

nature, and at seventeen he was both a poet and an enthusiast. He was enthusiastic, but as yet his enthusiasm had not found an object on which to fix itself—it was vague and general. He was full of adoration for the grand, the noble, and the sublime, but it was in the abstract,—in the concrete, it had not yet come home to him. Friends of his own age or position he had none. He had met comparatively few boys of his own age, and they had all been so far below the standard which his enthusiastic nature had pictured, that he had made no friend amongst them. He loved his father, but it was with a strange kind of love too. It was, if we may so speak, a love of the intellect more than of the heart, for there was too much of fear, respect, and awe in it for it to be a heart-love. Such was Edwin, and no wonder that his father almost idolized him in his own cold, reserved way. He watched over his health with the most jealous care. If he did but look a little paler, or if his eye were a little duller than usual, Mr. Stanhope was all anxiety and nervousness. Nothing was too costly or too rich for him, and of books, which were the only luxuries for which the boy seemed to care much, he had as many as would have furnished a library large enough for at least ten youths of his own age. His father would sit for hours watching him as he sat buried in some favorite author, his brow seeming to expand with thought, and intelligence, and the fire which he caught from the page he was perusing beaming out from his dark full eye. At such moments the face of the father would flush, too, with the excess of his pride and admiration, and the loving words which his pride seldom allowed him to utter would hang upon his lips, waiting to be expressed. But the shadow would pass over the haughty face, and the rising sigh would stifle the gentle feeling, and the cold stern man would be himself again. Yet, how he loved the boy; and could he have analyzed his own feelings, he would have found, perchance, that he loved him none the less for perceiving that so much of his own proud nature was reflected in him. He felt that the boy was mixed up with the deepest feelings and aspirations of his heart, but as yet even he scarcely knew how much his own life was wound up in that of his son. Oh! could he have seen what was coming, he would almost have slain him with his own hand, that the idol which his pride had built up in his heart might have remained there for ever unchanged. It would have been easier to kill him in his youth and beauty, than it was afterwards to tear his image from the heart where it had so long reigned almost supreme, and trample it in the dust with scorn and withering rage.

Maria was a gentle trusting girl, with a love for her brother that was almost childish in its tenderness. She had little of her father in her, as she more resembled her dead mother, and she clung consequently to her brother's stronger nature all the more closely on this account; and while she loved him much more tenderly than Mr. Stanhope ever could hope to do, it was with a pride scarcely inferior to his.

CHAPTER IV.

NATURE.—RESPECTABLE RELIGION.—FIRST ASPIRINGS.

WHEN Edwin Stanhope had reached his thirteenth year an incident happened which changed the whole course of his life. Up to this time one could scarcely say of him that he had been a religious boy. He was too intellectual and too full of lofty and romantic thought ever to be gross or animal, but he had led an essentially "natural" life. He had never pierced the cloud which nature, unenlightened by grace, interposes between man and the mysteries of the unseen world. He had never learnt how to commune with his Creator, and to walk through the world united to his God by that wonderful and constant union, which constitutes at once the happiness and the perfection of those who have begun to walk in the ways of Divine love. He had never learnt how to refer his actions to the Almighty God, and, consequently, he had naturally enough referred them to his own intellect; thus fostering in his heart, but almost unconsciously, a pride of the most refined nature,

He had never learnt how to analyze with the eye of faith the promptings of his heart, and the inclinations of his nature: and, therefore, he had indulged them as far as the pride of his intellect had allowed. He was a stranger to vice and yet he was full of evil, and he "felt" it. He felt there was a something wrong about him, and he knew not how to remedy it: he felt his heart to be void of holiness, and he knew not how to fill it.

Mr. Stanhope was a strict member of the Church of England. Not that he was a religious man. He and religion, in its true sense, were perfect strangers: but, he, nevertheless, attended his parish church most regularly. Morning and evening, on the Sunday, his haughty proud figure was to be seen advancing with slow steps towards the pew where he sat. The haughty, cold face—the slow, measured tread—the powdered footman following respectfully behind with gorgeously-bound prayer-book, until Mr. Stanhope was within a few steps of his seat, and then hastily advancing to open, with an obsequious bow, the door of his pew—all tended to remind one, most unpleasantly, of the Pharisee in the Gospel. In fact, you could see that even here Mr. Stanhope was worshipping self as much, or, to speak more correctly, a great deal more than God. It was respectable to be religious, and, therefore, he was religious; but here his religion ended. His father before him, and his grandfather, too, and their fathers and grandfathers, had all been good Protestants ever since the time of the "blessed reformation," which had so nearly swept Popery (as they imagined) from the face of the land: and, therefore, he was a Protestant too. His ancestors, had, every Sunday, for at least a hundred years, attended the same parish church, and, therefore, he attended it too. They had at stated periods approached what they styled the Table of the Lord, therefore, the cold haughty man who now represented the race, approached, too, at certain periods of the year; and this was probably the only reason he could have given for the faith that was in him. In a word, as an eminent American writer has so happily expressed it, "on Sunday he took off his hat, and made a distant bow to Almighty God," and in this his religion consisted.

Edwin always accompanied his father to church. To him Sunday was a day of gloom and bitterness. He was not permitted to read his favorite books, for the Sunday was too well observed in Mr. Stanhope's household to admit of such a desecration. Then it was so tedious to sit for three long hours or more in the gloomy old church, listening to a service which did not fall upon his heart, which never spoke to him as a reality. As far as the old church itself was concerned, he rather liked it than not. It was so old, so gloomy, and so romantic. There was a mystery about its old walls, and in its little nooks and corners, which, pleased him and, at the same time, awoke his curiosity; and, whilst the officiating clergyman was holding forth—to his own satisfaction no doubt, whatever his hearers might think—young Edwin's thoughts were often far away, and his vivid imagination would people the long dreary aisles with forms and figures of other days. Then the thought of his own dead mother would come into his mind, and he would wonder whether she were an angel in heaven, thinking of him, and watching over him, and whether she knew how great a void there was in his young heart, how much he had loved her, and how dearly he cherished her memory still. His large black eyes would grow lustrous with feeling as he thus communed with the world his imagination had created around him, and something so unearthly seemed to light his features at such times, that his father would gaze upon him with feelings little short of awe. After leaving the church he would sometimes, too, ask questions which would puzzle his father to answer. On one particular Sunday the preacher had taken as the subject of his discourse the beautiful history of our Divine Lord seeking the lost sheep. The child had listened with reverence and awe to the loving history, but there was something impressibly sad and melancholy in his face as he sat with his little hands tightly clasped in an attitude of the deepest attention. As soon as the service was over, and they had left the church, little Edwin said, quite timidly, but so sadly that Mr. Stanhope was both alarmed and astonished, "Dear papa, do you think I

am a lost sheep? Oh, I am so much afraid. I wish the good Jesus would come and take me on His shoulders and carry me home to Himself, for I am very, very wicked: and, oh! papa, I don't think that I love Him at all. O dear papa, do tell me; do you think I am a lost sheep?" and the tears gushed from his eyes, and his voice trembled with the excess of his feelings.

Mr. Stanhope was so overwhelmed with astonishment that, for a moment, he could not answer. It was so entirely out of the range of his experience. He had gone to church for years, and he had heard this very same sermon, but it had never occurred to him that he could be a lost sheep—he was too rich and respectable for that; and here was this mere child asking such extraordinary questions, his whole frame trembling with the intensity of his feelings, and his large dark eyes dilated with the eagerness with which he was waiting a reply to his question.

Mr. Stanhope fondled the little hand that was resting in his, and drew his boy closer to himself, as if he felt afraid of losing him. This strange language of Edwin's filled him with an indefinable dread. He had often felt, with bitterness of heart, how little real sympathy there was between himself and the child he so fondly loved, and these remarks of the child showed him still more clearly how far they were separated on such points as these. His emotion was scarcely less than that of the child, as he answered:—"My darling boy, what can have put these extraordinary ideas into your mind?" You who have been so carefully educated and so tenderly brought up. You make me quite uneasy, my child, and I hope you will not indulge these strange fancies any more."

"I hope you are not angry, papa; but indeed I could not refrain from asking you this little question. I have often, oh! very often thought of these things, and I have felt what a wicked child I was, and to-day, when I heard the preacher speaking of the sheep that had wandered away from the fold, oh! I knew, dear papa, that he meant me, and I thought, perhaps, you would tell me whether the good Jesus was seeking me, and whether He would ever find me, and take me up and carry me home to heaven. You are not angry, papa? I do not want to leave you, but I should like the good Jesus to find me, and teach me to be a good child, and take me home to Himself, if you would not be angry or sorry, dear papa." And again the large, dark eyes filled with tears, and the little hand trembled as it rested in that which pressed it so fondly.

"I am not angry, my child; but you must not talk in this manner. You must not talk of leaving me, for you know it would kill your papa to lose you, my darling, darling boy." And the cold, dark man softened more than he had ever done before. "I will invite Mr. Grant to dine with us, and you can speak to him about these things."

"Thank you, papa. But I don't care to see Mr. Grant; I cannot open my heart to him. Do you recollect when he dined with us a few Sundays ago? He had preached a very nice sermon in the morning about sin, and what a shocking thing it was to be a sinner, and when you were called out of the room in the evening after dinner, he took me on his knee and began to talk to me about the sermon, and to ask me whether I recollected it; and when I said that I did, and that I knew he was preaching about me, and that I was very sorry to be so wicked, he laughed, and, calling me a foolish little boy, he put me down from his knee, and began drinking his wine; and when I came to him again, and asked him to teach me how to be good, he laughed still more, and, offering me some fruit, told me to go and play with my little sister. But, papa, I went away very sorrowful to my own room, and I cried for a very long time, and I felt, oh! how sad I felt; and I do wish, papa, he had taught me how to be good. I would have been very attentive, and I would have tried very hard to learn; but he only laughed at me, papa, and I could not ask him again. But I do wish some one would teach me how to be good."

On several other occasions Edwin started similar questions, but his father always turned the conversation as soon as possible. In fact, he was afraid of the subject, but yet he could not help loving his boy all the more deeply as he watched these

aspirings of the lofty mind to something higher and more noble; and, with a kind of jealous awe, he marked the longings of the youthful heart to be more intimately united with its God. And he, poor child, grew up from childhood to boyhood, from boyhood to early manhood, with no one to teach him what he craved to know, with the noble instincts of his fresh young heart stretching themselves out to something to which he could not give a name, and no one to tell him what that something was,—with no one to tell him that the aspirings of his heart were after its God,—with no one to teach him that the proud passions that were in his nature were to be rendered subservient to those higher aspirations,—with no one to teach him how to be good. But let him take courage. The good Jesus is already seeking him to take him upon His shoulders, and carry him home to Himself.

CHAPTER V.

THE FIRST DOUBT.

WHEN Edwin was about fifteen years of age, it was announced one Sunday that in a few weeks the bishop of the diocese would visit the parish in order to administer confirmation to the younger members of the congregation, and they were told to prepare themselves to receive it. Edwin tried hard to understand what confirmation was, but he could not succeed. He felt that it would be useless to question his father on the point, and confidence between himself and Mr. Grant, the rector of the parish, had been so effectually crushed in his childhood by the incident mentioned in the last chapter, that he could not make up his mind to speak to him. He listened eagerly every Sunday, hoping to hear from the pulpit some explanation of the rite, or whatever it might be; but no explanation came until the Sunday preceding the day on which the bishop was to administer it. Then, indeed, Mr. Grant spoke about it; but Edwin could make nothing out of it. Mr. Grant was very "low church," and, consequently, looked upon confirmation as a mere rite, without sacramental character or efficacy attached to it, and in explaining his views he succeeded so perfectly in lowering that which he undertook to explain, that very few, indeed, of his hearers could have been much impressed with a feeling of awe or respect for that which they were to receive, or have felt much obligation of preparing themselves very exactly or carefully for its reception.

Edwin felt that there was something wrong in all this. He endeavored to make himself believe that confirmation was something more holy and of higher character than Mr. Grant's teaching seemed to suppose. Young as he was, and with the passions of his strong nature so little disciplined and brought under, he felt that he was unworthy to receive the sacred rite, for such he thought it. His active mind began to work, and he used to wonder whether confirmation had been always looked upon in the same light in which Mr. Grant seemed to regard it, and whether our forefathers had always had such a mean opinion of it, and if so, how it was that they had ever begun to practise it. These ideas, without taking any very definite shape, were continually flitting through his brain, filling him with uneasiness and doubt, and his conviction of the holiness of the whole proceeding was rendered complete, when Mr. Grant called one day, and after asking him a single question in the Catechism, gave him a certificate to be given to the bishop, or his attendant, certifying that he was duly prepared and fit to receive confirmation.

Edwin felt that he was not fit to receive it, and, moreover, that no one had taken pains to teach him how to prepare himself. How, then, could Mr. Grant certify that he was worthy to receive the sacred rite? Or, if he were worthy, what could be the dignity of that which he was to receive, if his preparation sufficed to receive it worthily? and, as his acute intellect pondered over all this, the first doubt which prepared the way for all that followed was implanted in his youthful mind.

On the appointed day, however, Edwin knelt before the

bishop, and had the tips of the fingers of that reverend personage placed for a moment on his head. In the evening Mr. Grant and a large number of his friends dined with Mr. Stanhope in honor of the event. They were all lavish with their congratulations to Edwin, and he was quite the hero of the day; but he was very sorrowful. His heart felt quite empty, and he would often, during the evening, have wished to retire to his own little room to relieve himself by tears. Why did they congratulate him? What had he done worthy of congratulation? And finding no answer to these questions which continually presented themselves to him, he felt himself more lonely than ever, more dissatisfied with himself and all around him, and the old feeling of his early childhood came back with renewed intensity, and he longed and wished and prayed for some one to teach him how to be good—for the good Jesus to take him on His shoulders to carry him home, for he felt as if this latest act of his religious life, so to call it, had but tended to render the gulf between himself and God wider and more apparent than ever; and, young as he was, natural as he was, unenlightened as he was, he knew that it ought not to be so.

On the Sunday preceding the confirmation, Mr. Grant announced that it was his wish that all the recipients should, on the Sunday following, approach the communion table. If poor Edwin had been perplexed about confirmation, his perplexities and troubles were now increased a thousand-fold. Mr. Stanhope "received" three or four times a year, because most respectable people did the same; but he had no fixed and clear notion of the nature and character of the action he performed; and Mr. Grant's views were of the very lowest kind. Edwin had frequently heard him declaim with violence against what he called the idolatrous and blasphemous doctrine of the "real presence" of our Lord in the sacrament. He had heard Mr. Grant frequently declare that there was nothing but the mere bread and wine present, and that it was impious and wicked to believe anything else, and consequently he was inclined to believe it must be so; but ever and anon the solemn word came flitting through his mind: "This is My Body," (St. Matthew, xxvi. 26); and also, "This is My Blood of the New Testament, which shall be shed for many unto remission of sins," (ver. 28), and he could not see how to reconcile them with the teachings of Mr. Grant. Not that he thought Mr. Grant could be wrong, or be teaching what was false, Edwin knew nothing of religion but what he had learnt from his father and Mr. Grant, and he thought it certain that they were right; but, nevertheless, there was something in their teaching—and especially on this point—with which his intellect refused to be satisfied. Moreover, as the day drew near when he was to approach the Lord's table for the first time, he sat for hours with his Bible before him, pondering over the passages relating to the Eucharist, and becoming more and more perplexed, and more and more uneasy. With an ardent desire to do what was right, he meditated on the words of St. Paul: "Therefore, whoever shall eat this bread or drink the chalice of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But, let a man prove himself: and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that chalice. For, he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the body of the Lord" (1 Cor. xi. 27, 28, 29); but the more he thought the more bewildered he became; and he asked himself how he could be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord, if that body and blood were not present in the Sacrament? or how he could eat and drink judgment to himself for not discerning the body of the Lord, if the body of the Lord were not present? Then, at times, he would seem convinced that Mr. Grant was right, and that there was nothing present but bread and wine; but the awful denunciation of the apostle would present itself in all its dreadful clearness to him, and his cheek would blanch, and he would tremble with fear and excitement as he murmured the solemn words: "Therefore, let a man prove himself. . . . For, he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the body of the Lord."

In this state of perplexity and doubt—with no one to counsel or instruct him—with no one to whisper in his ear the words of truth—with all the instincts and feelings of his nature prompting him to take the words he so often pondered in their plain and literal sense, and with these instincts crushed and beaten down by the teaching to which he was a constant listener—at one moment trembling as he thought again and again of the inspired words: “Therefore, let a man prove himself. For, he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the body of the Lord,”—at another moment stifling his difficulties by the remembrance of all he had heard from Mr. Grant—with no fixed idea or belief, but with his mind one vast chaos of uncertainty and fear, poor Edwin approached his first and last communion in the church where his forefathers had so long worshipped. We say his *last*, too; for, he approached no more. He was so utterly wretched after receiving the bread and wine—there was such a feeling of misery and desolation in his heart, such a want of reality and truth about this action, which should have been so sacred and so full of holy joy and consolation—that Edwin could never bring himself to repeat it. Several times Mr. Stanhope reminded him that the following Sunday was a “communion day;” but Edwin received the announcement so coldly,—merely saying, “Papa, I think I shall not approach;” that his father did not press him on the matter, attaching, as he himself did, so little importance to it.

Thus Edwin grew up to his seventeenth year, his romantic nature developing itself more and more every day, and his aspirings after something more holy and grand than anything he knew becoming daily stronger and more marked. Frank, open and ingenuous, it was impossible to know him without loving him and admiring him; but his uneasiness on the matter of religion, and the state he was in, had grown upon him every day since the incidents we have already mentioned, and the workings of his active mind had left a languor and paleness on his fair young cheek, and imparted a weary, anxious look to his large dark eye, which were painful to look upon, telling, as they did, of a young and loving heart not at peace—speaking, too, through the hectic flush which now so often came upon him, of such pain, and care, and grief, as youthful trusting hearts like his should never know or feel.

But, again, let him take courage. Light and comfort are at hand; brightness is near. The good Jesus is looking for His lamb, that with loving hand and mercy breathing voice He may take it on His shoulders, to carry it home forever to Himself.

CHAPTER VI

A CHRISTMAS PARTY.—CHRISTMAS THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS.— A PROPOSAL.

WE have already mentioned that about the time Edwin reached his seventeenth birthday an event occurred which altered the whole course of his life. It was Christmas time, and an invitation had been sent to Edwin to spend a few days at the house of Mr. Seymour, an old friend of the Stanhope family. Edwin had almost determined to decline the invitation, as he felt every day less and less fitted for society; but Mr. Stanhope, who had marked with much uneasiness, the increasing languor of his son's appearance, and the depression of spirits under which he so frequently labored, pressed him so earnestly to go, that at length he rather unwillingly acceded.

Mr. Seymour was a fine specimen of the English merchant. Bluff, generous, and hearty, he loved to be happy himself, and to see happy faces smiling around him. He had, at this particular Christmas, gathered round him a large party, principally of young persons, and every preparation was being made to enable them to spend a “merry Christmas” in the fullest sense of the word.

When Edwin arrived on Christmas Eve, he found the house of Mr. Seymour decorated from top to bottom with such a profusion of holly, ivy, and evergreens of all descriptions, that it appeared a perfect wood. There was a mistletoe hanging from the roof of every room, the gorgeous mirrors were framed with

wreaths of the graceful ivy, and every statue or figure, with a hand to hold it, held within its grasp something green to tell of the happy time. In the evening as they sat, a merry band, round the ample hearth, with no other light than the sparkling flames which burst from the yule log, with the fresh red berries glimmering and twinkling so brightly and cheerfully in the flickering light, while the song, and the jest, and the tale went round, with young hearts laughing so gaily and so free from care, the weariest grew glad and the sorrow-stricken were beguiled for a moment from their griefs, and the drop that was about to fall into sorrow's cup was arrested for awhile. When one of Mr. Seymour's sons, a fine open-hearted fellow, during the evening sang the following Christmas song, there were few present, either young or old, who were untouched, or who remained unmoved as visions of the past or future flitted before them. There were few who remained insensible to the deep feeling, affections, and sympathies which Christmas time, and Christmas thoughts, and Christmas songs never fail to awaken. There were few of the young whose glowing hearts did not glow warmer still, and out of whose bright eyes the happiness of their hearts did not shine too plainly to be mistaken. There were few of the old who were not carried back to times gone by, when they sat in childish gladness round a well-remembered hearth, one of a happy band now scattered far and wide; and what wonder if their hearts grew full, and their eyes grew dim, as the light of their mother's smile seemed to play about them once again, and the tones of the father's voice re-echoed in their souls; and, at the moment memory had beguiled them, and in thought they were heedless children again, the vision vanished, to be replaced by the old churchyard and the turf-covered mound, with the Christmas chime wailing a sad and plaintive air around the graves, like the song of the surging sea as it breaks for ever on the sounding shore. What wonder that they forgot that the chime wailed but for a moment round the graves of those who might listen no more to its song, ere it went its way on the frosty breeze, to carry its message of love to young and old,—ringing so softly and with such magic sweetness through the sacred place, where at midnight hour the kneeling crowd is wrapt in silent prayer, as blazing lights and sweetest scents and music's thrilling strains are all employed to greet in humble love and praise the God-made Man, as once again He descends upon the altar of His love—speaking to the schoolboy's heart of his mother's love—telling the weary of rest to come, filling the hearts of all with love, and joy, and hope, and bliss.

“I love thee right well, with the merry swell
Of thy brave old cheery voice;
As thou comest again, 'mid the hail and the rain,
And biddest thy children rejoice.
I love the soft sheen of thy holly green,
And I love on its leaves to gaze;
I love the glad sight of its berries bright,
As they gleam in the yule-log's blaze.
I love thee, I love thee, I love thy brave chime,
I love thee right dearly, thou old Christmas time.

“I love thee right well, thou old Christmas bell
As thou swellest adown the vale;
I love thy sweet song, as it fitteth along,
And telleth the Christmas tale.
Cold, cold is the heart that taketh no part
In the joy of the Christmas time;
That groweth not light, with glad visions, and bright
At the song of the Christmas chime.
I love thee, I love thee, I love the brave chime,
That greeteth thee loudly, thou old Christmas time.

“I love thee right well for the tale thou dost tell
Of days that are v. le'd and gone;
When hearts true and dear met at least once a year
Round the hearth, when thy gladness o'er shone;
Where the yule-log's soft gleam reflected each beam
Of the eye, as we sat in its light;
Where the tale and the song in mirth pass'd along,
And looks in thy presence grew bright.
I love thee, I love thee, and long for the chime,
That greeteth thee bravely, thou old Christmas time.

“I love thee, old bell, though a tale thou mayest tell
Of hopes that are wither'd and dead;
I bless thy glad peal, though its notes may reveal
The absence of those who have fled.
Then linger awhile around yon old pile,
And murmur above their cold clay;
I'll shed the hot tear for the lost ones so dear,
Then joy with the friends of to-day.
Oh! still do I love thee, and love thy brave chime,
And e'er will I love thee thou old Christmas time.”

The evening was far spent, in fact it was close upon midnight, when one of the party proposed that they should go to

the midnight Mass, which was being celebrated in a Catholic chapel close at hand. The younger members of the party received the proposition with acclamations, and at once prepared to set out. It appeared to most of them, young and giddy as they were, as a very appropriate finish to their evening's entertainment. Most of them had never been within the walls of a Catholic church during their lives; none of them knew anything about the doctrines of that church but what they had learnt from the teachings of their own pulpits, and that teaching, we need hardly say, had been of no very correct nature. They had constantly heard Popery described as a worship of forms and ceremonies without meaning or significance, a mere empty form intended to delude weak people, and calculated to bring eternal ruin upon its deluded votaries. It was, therefore, with feelings of mingled contempt and curiosity that they prepared to set out in order to finish their evening's amusement by this visit to the Catholic chapel. Edwin alone of the young people made no preparation to accompany the party.

"Why, Edwin," cried young Seymour, "won't you come with us? You don't mean to stay at home, do you, and refuse to join us? I'm sure you'll like it, for I have been told that this Mass, or whatever they call it, is one of the most amusing things in the world; so many genuflections, and crossings, and bowings, that you can't understand what its about at all; besides, their music is generally very good, and it would be a pity to miss the sight; so do come with us, there's a good fellow."

"My dear Frank," answered Edwin, very calmly, but very sorrowfully, "I think you don't know what you ask me to do. I know very little about the belief or profession of these Catholics; and would to God I understood more clearly even my own belief. I have often heard Mr. Grant say they are idolators, but I do not believe it, for I know that educated men, such as the Catholic body has within it, would never be guilty of such a deadly sin. My French master was a Catholic; and although he never spoke to me on religion, I know he was a good man,—so gentle, so humble, and so meek, when papa was cross and angry with him, as he sometimes was without much reason. I repeat I know nothing of Catholic doctrine or belief, but I am sure charity obliges me to believe them to be sincere in their professions as we are in ours; and yet you ask me to accompany you to one of their churches (where they are assembled to worship God according to the best of their power and knowledge), just as you would ask me to accompany you to the theatre, or any other place of amusement. No, Frank, I will never do it; I will not make the house of God—for even their churches are the houses of God—a mere place of vain amusement and idle curiosity. I will never insult the religious belief of any of my fellow Christians by such impertinent intrusions upon them as that which you now ask me to join you in perpetrating. No Frank, I will not go with such motives as these; and knowing me as you do, I am astonished you should have asked me."

"Why, my dear fellow, how warmly you do take this matter. I am sure I didn't ask you to join us with any such motives as those which you ascribe to us. I confess I have some little curiosity to see the High Mass, but I trust I am as incapable as yourself, Edwin, of entering any place of worship whatsoever, with the motives you so justly repudiate. I trust I am as incapable as yourself of insulting the convictions of any class of professing Christians, and now I hope you won't refuse any longer to come with us."

As he finished speaking, Frank Seymour held out his hand and looked at Edwin with so much sympathy and generous feeling in his face, that Edwin at once took the proffered hand, and shook it warmly. The others gathering round and protesting their innocence of any such unworthy motives as those he had mentioned, Edwin allowed himself to be overcome, and prepared to set out with his friends.

As Edwin and Frank were passing out of the house, arm in arm, the latter jokingly remarked,—“Why, Edwin, my dear friend, you got so warm just now that I think you must be half a Papist already. Is it so? Do tell me.”

The tears rushed into Edwin's eyes as he answered,—“No, Frank, I am not a Papist, as you style it. I have never read a Catholic book in my life, and I am now about to enter a Catholic Church for the first time; but if I thought it would make me a better man, or bring me nearer to God, I would willingly become a Catholic to-morrow, for I cannot—I really, really cannot remain as I am,” he continued with the tears streaming from his eyes. “I cannot remain the cold, worldly, tepid creature that I am—it will kill me, it is killing me already, for I have read, and prayed, and thought until my brain is almost worn out, and yet there is nothing but darkness, and fear, and uncertainty on every side. Oh! would to God I knew what to do.

But, again, let him take comfort, for light is at hand.

CHAPTER VII.

INTRODUCES THE CRITICS AND DISPOSES OF THEM—A MIDNIGHT MASS, AND WHAT CAME OF IT.

AND NOW, whilst Edwin Stanhope and his friends are making their way to the Catholic Church, situated a little distance from B—square, no doubt many of our readers are grumbling, and declaring that we have altogether overdrawn the hero (if so we may style him) of this story. Bluff old Mr. Brown, whose “*summum bonum*” appears to be contained in the three magic letters, £ s. d.—“the Roman initials for pounds shillings and pence,”—declares that it is all stuff and nonsense, and that the young puppy ought to have had something better to think about; and, moreover, that a good horse-whipping would have been the greatest boon that could possibly have been conferred upon him; and the rosy face of the good old man becomes quite purple with indignation as he conjures up the idea of his son, Tom Brown, taking any such ridiculous notions, and thinking about religion and that sort of thing; “and I should like to find you, sir,” says Paterfamilias, across the table to Tom, “getting any of these hairbrained notions into your head about becoming better, and desiring something more perfect. Trash, sir! Nonsense! Humbug!” And poor old Brown waxes quite warm, especially as he thinks of all his own virtues and perfections.

“Be as good as your father, sir, and you will do. Be as clever and longheaded as your grandfather, and you will be perfect. But as to getting any of Master Edwin's fanciful notions, I should like to catch you at it; that is all, sir. I do not believe a word of it.”

Old Brown, however, need not be afraid of Tom; for Tom, a fine specimen of the “animal,” with a decided taste for showy vests, chains, and pins, quite agrees with the “old boy,” as he irreverently styles his father, that it is all a humbug, and that he does not believe there ever was such a person as Edwin Stanhope; and that if there were he was a lack-a-daisical fool, who wanted ducking in a horse-pond to give him some spirit and manliness—by spirit and manliness Tom meaning drinking, smoking, swearing, and the other fashionable and more objectionable amusements in which honest Tom and his class find their pleasure and perfection.

Then there is Miss Simper, who has read novels until she fancies herself surrounded by an atmosphere of mystery and romance, and who, when she hears a rap at the door, rises from her book with such a graceful air, and swims along the narrow passage of the dwelling which she poetically describes as “her childhood's home,” thinking of the knight in disguise who is seeking his “ladye faire,” and is only recalled to sublunary things by finding at the door, instead of her trusty knight, the milkman, or the butcher's boy with the sheep's-head for the daily broth, little thinking or reflecting, poor thing, as she takes it with a jaunty and abstracted air, how many sheep's-heads there are planted on human shoulders. Miss Simper has read our description of Edwin, and she is sure he must have been a dear creature; but then he was so very foolish to trouble himself about these matters, which after all were of so little importance, as he was doing the best he could; and even Miss

Simper cannot help thinking that we have overdrawn him, and that his affections and desires would necessarily have fixed themselves on objects more in accordance with her ideas and experiences, and that it is so unnatural to suppose him thinking so much about religion and such abstract things.

We have a great (but qualified) respect for old Brown. In any question relating to turtle soup, or an investment in the funds, we should be proud to have the advice of the old gentleman. If there were question of dogs, tobacco, or other such matters, we should be equally glad to have the advice of his son Tom. We should submit at once to Miss Simper on all matters which naturally fall under the head of romance. We are sorry to incur their disapprobation, but we can only assure them again that our story is true, and that if their experience refuse to recognize any such person as Edwin Stanhope, we have nothing more to say, except to repeat that our story is a true one, and that we have merely sketched Edwin as we knew him. We would beg them always to recollect that we have never said that he was perfect, but merely that he was aspiring after something better. We would remind them, too (although old Brown will probably say that it is all trash and nonsense), that there is wide difference between the aspirings of the heart and intellect, and the reducing those aspirings to practice—that it is *one* thing to see and desire to do what is better, and *another* thing to do it; in a word, that, in morals, the intellect is often converted long before the will, and that many a one who desires something better, who is dissatisfied with his state, and who to a certain extent despises himself for his own weakness, remains a slave to those passions which at once degrade and defile him.

But leaving the Browns, and Simpers, and the rest of our critics, to pursue their own reflections, we must follow Edwin on his way to the Catholic chapel, or rather church; for, thank God, the day is gone by when we were compelled to confine ourselves to mean, paltry chapels; and the church to which Edwin and his friends were wending their way is truly worthy of the more exalted name. Its beautiful proportions, the graceful arch of its noble roof, the delicate tracery of its windows, are such as to strike the beholders with pleasure and admiration, despite the disadvantage under which it labors on account of its unfavorable position. Beautiful as is its exterior, it is far surpassed by the interior. The chastened light that streams through its richly-stained windows tones down and mellows what might be otherwise considered the excessive splendor and richness of its decorations, and standing about the middle of the church, with its magnificent and costly altar before you, with saints and "mighty men of old" looking down upon you from every wall, with gold and richest colors to greet the eye wherever it may fall, the *tout ensemble* is one, which, to use the hackneyed phrase, it is easier to imagine than describe.

When Edwin and his friends, leaving the darkness outside, suddenly entered the church, they involuntarily paused for a moment, dazzled by the splendor of the scene which met their eyes. Service had already commenced, and the altar, which was the first object which met their gaze, was literally a blaze of light. Numberless tapers, their brightness mellowed down by the choice plants and evergreens intermingled with them, lighted the church with a clearness, distinctness, and soft beauty which were perfectly enchanting. The sanctuary was full of priests in gorgeous vestments, and youthful acolytes, but too proud to minister at the altar of God. Clouds of fragrant incense were floating slowly to the roof of the sanctuary, and shedding their sweet odours through the whole edifice; and when the organ pealed forth the "*Gloria in excelsis Deo*," Edwin felt his heart grow hot within him, and he almost trembled to find himself already so much moved and so much pleased. With eager, yet with reverent curiosity, he drank in the whole scene. He looked around, and he saw every one wrapt in silent prayer, from the poor woman who was telling her beads with such fervor, kneeling on the stone floor of the aisle, to the young boy of nine or ten, who was kneeling by his side in the bench to which he had been courteously beckoned

by its occupiers. He watched them narrowly, and he saw that they were absorbed in prayer. He saw the old woman throw out her arms and raise her eyes in a manner which for a moment he thought theatrical; but he looked again, and his noble mind bent itself in humble reverence to the poor old woman for he saw her devotion was *real* and *true*, and that she was neither thinking nor caring whether human eye saw her or not. He saw the tears rolling softly down the cheek of the boy who knelt beside him; he marked the clasped hand and the closed eye, and the gentle and angel-like look of the innocent child, and he could have fallen down and kissed his feet. He saw what he had never seen in his life before—he saw warm glowing piety; he saw real and true "heart worship;" he saw the packed and crowded congregation worshipping like one man; his fine taste recognized and drank in all the beauty of the ceremonial which was going on; he contrasted it with the cold formality of his own worshipping; he contrasted the deep and earnest devotion of those around him with his own coldness, his own doubts, and the unreality of his own dealings with God, and despite the genuflections, &c., which *did* seem a little strange to him at first, he felt that he was in the house of God, and that he was amongst those who were worshipping God as he had never seen Him worshiped before. The long looked-for light was coming at last, and lowlier and more humbly still he bent his head as he felt that God was working in his heart, and as the first strains of the sweet old Christmas hymn, "*Adeste Fideles*," fell upon his ear, he hid his face in his hands and gave full vent to the tears which he no longer sought or wished to restrain.

Yes, thou sweet old Christmas hymn, there is something in thee which speaks to most hearts, telling, as thou dost, of loving, trusting joy, that dares to go at Christmas time to the humble crib, and looking on the smiling Babe as He lifts his tiny hands to bless the gazer-in, dares to join the swelling song, and dares to utter with its sin-stained lips the glorious strain which angel tongues were first to sing—which dares to forget its own weakness, its own misery, ay, even its own sin, in the all-sufficient mercy of the Infant's smile. Oh! again do we say, "God speed thee," thou dear old hymn, for thy message is one of love, and joy, and hope! We have heard some say that thou art hackneyed, but thou art as dear to us, thou comest to us laden with as much joy and comfort as thou didst some dozen years ago, when after wandering long in the mazes of error, we heard thee for the first time on one never-to-be-forgotten Christmas night, and when, like Edwin, we were fain to bow our head and hide our face that men might not see the gush of tears which greeted the message of love and rest which thou didst bring to our weary, fainting soul.

It was, however, at the time of the Holy Communion that the greatest impression was made upon Edwin. He looked with reverence, not unmixed with awe, upon the crowds who thronged to the altar to receive the bread of life; and even he felt the majesty of "the Presence." He saw the faith of all speaking in the face, the eye, and the reverently-clasped hands of every one who approached the altar, and he marked with something like envy the calm, mild, and smiling joy which lighted each countenance, as the receiver turned away with his God within his breast. He felt that faith such as that which he now beheld for the first time was worth any price that could be paid for it; that it was, in truth, the hidden pearl of the Gospel; and with fervor and deep sincerity he besought the Almighty God to enlighten him and make known to him His holy will, that seeing what was right he might embrace it at any cost or suffering to himself; and so absorbed was he in prayer, and so lost was he in the contemplation of all he had seen and heard, that when the service was over and the congregation slowly separating, it was not until Frank Seymour had twice touched him on the arm that he bethought himself of where he was, and, wiping the tears from his face, rose to follow his friend. As he passed out into the night, its coldness and darkness seemed to him to envelop him, as it were, with a pall; and the howling wind seemed to find a voice to tell him that he had left peace, and faith, and rest, in the bright and cheerful

church behind, and that the cold, the darkness, and the withering feel of the winter's night, were the fitting emblems of his own poor heart—fitting emblems of that to which he was now returning—fitting emblems of the care, the pain, and the grief which must press so heavily upon him should he ever take the step, which even now he felt he must sooner or later be compelled to do. But, again, let him take courage; the Infant has smiled upon him from His cr.b, and all will yet be well.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE FIRST STEP.—STUDY AND CONVICTION.—THE FAMILY DOCTOR AT FAULT.

CHRISTMAS passed away, and Edwin returned to his father's house. His ideas had as yet taken no definite shape, but that Christmas night, that midnight Mass, were ever present to him. When he accompanied his father to the usual Sunday service, he continually contrasted its coldness and formality with the warmth, the grandeur, and the gushing gladness of that never-to-be-forgotten night, and his heart yearned to know more of the doctrines of the Catholic Church.

At length, one day, when walking out alone, he remarked the establishment of a Catholic publisher, and, entering, timidly asked to be supplied with a few works containing a simple exposition of Catholic doctrine. The attendant selected for him "Challoner's Catholic Christian Instructed," and a few other simple works of the same kind, and Edwin hastened home, that he might, in solitude, learn more of the faith to which he already felt so favorably disposed. To say that he read these works, would give but a very imperfect idea of the eagerness and avidity with which he made himself master of their contents; he literally devoured them. Morning, noon, and night, when he could steal away to his room, he sat down to the task now so dear to him, and, as the grand and impressive claims of the Catholic faith to his sole allegiance were unfolded to him, his fine intellect at once recognized the justice of those claims, and the truth of her pretensions. He recognized at once that for which he had been so earnestly looking during the last two or three years—a clear, simple, defined rule of faith. He found everything laid down with the utmost precision, leaving no room for doubt, wavering, or hesitating belief.

He had studied with the most profound and prayerful diligence the portions of his works treating of the Church, and the marks by which the true Spouse of Christ is to be known. He saw that Christ instituted a Church to carry on the work begun by Himself for the salvation of souls, and that this Church should have commenced at once her operations. He saw that she was to be "One," "Holy," "Catholic," and "Apostolical." He saw that she must be infallible in her teachings, since men were bound, under pain of damnation, to listen to her; and all this being proved, then came the all-important question, which of the churches, calling themselves Christian, could show that they possessed the marks which were to point out to all men the one true fold. Having seen that unity of faith and belief on all points—that sanctity proclaimed by miracles and other supernatural gifts—that Catholicity embracing all times and all ages, since her foundation, and all peoples—that apostolicity derived from a regular and most clearly defined succession from the apostles themselves, pertained to the Church of Rome alone, he was fain to confess that she must be the spouse of Christ, "the mother and mistress of all the churches." He considered most attentively, too, the claims of the church in which he had been, at least nominally, baptized. So far from any unity of belief, he saw that she was tossed about by every wind of doctrine, and that there was not a single one of her doctrines which had not been denied by some one who called himself a Protestant, and who still remained a member of her communion. He saw some upholding, and others denying, the divinity of our Lord. He saw some maintaining, and others rejecting, the necessity of baptismal regeneration;

and so with every other doctrine, and yet he knew that our Lord had said that those alone should be saved who observed *all* things (St. Matt., xxviii, 20), and he knew equally well that neither our Lord nor his apostles could have taught contradictory doctrines. He saw that she could not point to a single miracle, or other supernatural gift; whilst, on the other hand, the miracles and other supernatural gifts of the Catholic Church were too palpable and plain to be called into question. Her claims to Catholicity and Apostolicity were still more weak and untenable; and so far from professing to be infallible, she openly repudiated the very idea, and yet Edwin asked himself, "how can I safely remain a member of a church which admits that she can lead me astray, or which, at all events, will not admit that she cannot. The Church of Christ," so he reasoned, "must be infallible, because I am bound to listen to her even as I am bound to listen to Christ himself." (Luke, x, 16; Matt., xviii, 17; Matt., xxviii, 18; and St. Paul to the Ephesians, iv, 11). "Now, the church of which I am a member rejects the very idea of infallibility; how, then, can she be the true church?" Time after time, and day after day, poor Edwin read and pondered, and pondered and read, always finishing with a clearer and more firm conviction that there must be one true church, and that the Church of Rome alone could claim the title.

As he finished one set of books he procured another, but always with the greatest secrecy; for, the dreadful thought was ever present to his mind—what would his father say when he discovered what was going on; and the bare thought of his father's anger caused poor Edwin to tremble and grow pale. For six months he read and studied in this manner. It would be almost correct to say that he was now convinced. The claims of the Church had come before him in all their grandeur, and he had recognized those claims. All minor difficulties of teaching had been at once disposed of by the thought that she was the true Church, the infallible Church, which could not lead him astray; and he longed for the time when he might lay his poor, weary, aching head upon her motherly bosom, and find full light and rest for his fainting soul. He thought of her doctrine with regard to her sacraments, so clear, so well defined, and so full of consolation. He compared them with his own confirmation and communion, and he longed for the time when he might imbibe from those channels of grace that strength which he felt so much to want. He had at once admitted the truth and beauty of the Church's teaching in regard to Mary and the saints, and he had already procured a print of the Divine Mother, which he carefully guarded as a dear treasure. Alone in his chamber at night, and secure from observation, he always unlocked his desk, and taking thence his treasure, knelt before it, and, with all the fervor of his young heart, begged the sweet Mother to take him under her protection, and obtain for him strength to do what was right, and he never doubted how much he owed to her aid and intercession.

So he went on for six long months, becoming every day more weary and more careworn, with his young cheek becoming every day paler and more wan, and the languor which weighed him down heavier and more painful to bear. As yet no one had learnt his secret. His sister, with all the quick perception of love, had long seen that there was something weighing upon his mind, and more than once had begged of him to tell her what it was; but she had not urged him when she perceived how painful the subject was. Mr. Stanhope looked with anxiety and foreboding upon his son, and trembled lest anything should befall him. The family physician was frequently called in, but he was unable to state what ailed Edwin except that he was very weak and feeble, and that his mind seemed to be uneasy. He recommended change of scenery, company, &c.; and so Edwin was hurried about from place to place, but with no fruit. He returned home from every excursion as weary and careworn as when he had set out; for everywhere he carried with him his mind, so ill at ease for the present, so anxious and fearful for the future. He read with avidity his books on Catholic doctrine. He was virtually con-

vinced, and he longed to be received into the bosom of the Church. At times he fancied himself a member of the Church, and, forgetting everything else in the pleasing thought, he would be happy for a moment; but in an instant the illusion would vanish, and his father's cold, stern face, would rise before him, and the rage of the will which he had never yet dared to contradict, would appear ready to overwhelm him in the intensity of its madness when he should discover all; and poor Edwin, shuddering and trembling, would hide his face in his hands, and beg of God to give him strength to be faithful when the fearful struggle should arrive.

Six months passed away, and Edwin felt that he could not bear it much longer. He had never entered a Catholic church since the memorable Christmas night, and he knew no Catholic to whom he could speak; but he felt that he must soon take some decisive step. At length, after much anxious thought, he came to the determination of writing to Father Eustace, whom he knew, from inquiries which he had made, to be the priest of the neighboring chapel. He briefly stated his position; that he had read Catholic works and was virtually convinced of the truth of that religion; that he was anxious to know more and to fulfil the will of God, but that he was entirely dependent upon his father, whose anger he knew would be terrible when he should discover all this, and he concluded by begging Father Eustace to counsel and advise him what to do.

Father Eustace wrote to him immediately, advising him first of all to make everything known to his father, as that gentleman, being a member of a church which is always so loud in its professions of liberty of conscience, could not complain of his son's following that which his conscience pointed out to him to be right. Poor Father Eustace! he little knew Mr. Stanhope when he gave this advice; for, with men of Mr. Stanhope's class, liberty of conscience is all very well when it concerns yourself, but it is a different thing when it concerns your children, your dependents, &c. In the second place, he pressed Edwin most earnestly to come and see him as soon as he possibly could, as they would be able to see their way much clearer after a personal interview, and when they knew each other better; concluding by again pressing upon him to mention all to his father, but assuring him that, until he did so, his secret was perfectly safe with him. Edwin would have given worlds to be able to follow Father Eustace's advice, and time after time in imagination he went through the interview, in which, after telling his father all, he was to fall upon his neck and beg of him not to spurn him. On more than one evening, on which Mr. Stanhope had been unusually kind to him, Edwin actually rose to his feet to go down stairs to his father's room to tell him all, but again the cold, stern face rose up before him, and, groaning aloud, "O God! O God! I cannot, I dare not do it," he threw himself on a chair, and wept as if his young and loving heart would break.

CHAPTER IX.

NEW FRIEND AND A TRUE ONE.—STOLEN INTERVIEWS.—A CRISIS APPROACHES.

ONE Sunday evening in June, when Mr. Stanhope was dining out, Edwin set off to pay his first visit to Father Eustace. He had dropped a line the day before, saying that he would seize the opportunity, and begging the priest to make arrangements that they might be perfectly private, as he was as much afraid as ever of his father acquiring any knowledge of that in which he was engaged.

Edwin's heart beat very fast, indeed, as he entered the street in which Father Eustace dwelt. He felt that he was now about to take a decisive step, and he trembled as he contemplated it. Several times he was about to turn back, and he even felt glad when he experienced a difficulty in finding the house he sought. He wavered for a moment, and was about to return, when, looking once more down the street, his eye fell upon the cross surmounting the gable of Father Eustace's church, and hailing

the sacred emblem, courage returned to his heart, the moment of hesitation was over, the demon was vanquished, and, in another instant, he was at the dwelling of the priest, had knocked timidly at his door, and was warmly clasped in the embrace of him whom he sought. In a few minutes he was sitting in the easy chair in the priest's little room, and had time to look upon Father Eustace, who sat opposite to him. He was at first rather disappointed, for Father Eustace did not quite come up to the ideas he had formed of a priest. Edwin, who, to a great extent, had formed his notions of a priest from books and from his own rather romantic ideas, thought Father Eustace was scarcely pale enough, and that there was not sufficient mystery about him; in one word, that he was rather too matter-of-fact; but when he looked into the kind bright eye, and saw it glistening with sympathy and interest, and when he listened to the pleasant and encouraging voice, he forgot the romance in the reality, and the reality was that he had found a real, true, sincere, and kind friend.

Yes, dear Father Eustace, the grave has closed over thee now, and thou hast gone to thy reward. Like the very best of us when we are gone, men very seldom mention thee; but there is, at least, one heart which misses the pleasant twinkle of thy bright black eye, and the joyous gladness of thy sunny smile, telling, as it ever did, of the overflowing goodness of thy own great heart. There is one who never will and who never can forget that when he came to thee, like Edwin, for advice, he found thee a kind and prudent counsellor, and who, when he, later on, came to thee an outcast from his home and friends, for daring to do that which was right, found in thy dear and gushing love that which repaid him to the full, and which made him forget all that he had left behind. There is, at least, one who will never forget the pride with which thou didst watch his onward steps in the way of God; one who will never forget that thy sympathy was ever deepest when his need was greatest; one who, so long as it shall be given him to ascend the altar of God, will never forget thee, nor allow thy honored and revered remembrance to pass from out his heart, but who will cherish to the last the memory of his best and dearest friend. Peace be with thee, dear Father Eustace.

The interview between Edwin and Father Eustace was long, for they had much to say to each other. Edwin opened his heart most freely to his newly-found friend, and concealed nothing from him. Father Eustace found him perfectly well read up in Catholic doctrine, and requiring but very little more instruction before being in a fit state to be received into the Church. His efforts were, therefore, principally directed to inspiring him with courage and confidence to take the desired, but at the same time, dreaded step. To say that Father Eustace was at once most deeply interested in the generous, high-minded boy who had thus come to him would be superfluous. He saw how the mighty hand of God had brought the work about in its own mysterious way, and he determined that nothing should be wanting on his part to perfect what had been so happily begun; but his open brow became clouded and sadly thoughtful as he contemplated the difficulties to be overcome.

Finding that he could not prevail upon Edwin to mention this matter to his father at present, he selected from his small, but choice, library several works which he deemed would be useful to his young friend, counselled him to make himself more intimately acquainted with the Catholic religion, and placing himself in the hands of God without reserve, to trust to the loving Providence which "reacheth from end to end mightily, and disposeth all things sweetly," to bring everything to a favorable issue in its own good time. He besought him to be fervent in prayer, that God might dispose his father to receive the information with less anger than Edwin dreaded, and assuring him that he would daily remember him at the altar, begged that he would come and see him as often as possible.

During the four months that followed, Edwin had several stolen interviews with his friend, whom he loved more and more. Father Eustace was urgent with him to take the dreaded step, and throw himself, unreservedly, into the arms of Provi-

dence; but Edwin, although quite convinced and anxious to do so, still held back. The cold, stern face for ever rose up before him, and he shrank with fear and trembling from the conflict with it, and let us not dare to censure him. Let not us who are in the full light of God Almighty's Church, and strengthened by His holy and special graces, dare to blame the young and fearful boy who hesitated, and trembled, and held back, when he thought of all that would probably come upon him when he should have taken the dreaded step. His father's fearful rage—his own utter dependence upon him, and his probable expulsion from his home, the wrenching asunder of all old ties, the utter chasm between himself and all that had been that must follow; in a word, the probable poverty, desolation, and misery—all, all rushed upon him, and what wonder if, deprived as he was of the special graces of God's holy sacraments, the poor boy trembled and held back. Put yourself in his place, my good, cozy, but somewhat censorious friend, and tell me what would you have done.

Although Father Eustace labored to inspire Edwin with confidence, and to persuade him that Mr. Stanhope would not be so much enraged as he imagined, still, when he considered that gentleman's pride, and how much he would consider himself degraded by his son's forsaking his religion, and embracing one which gentlemen of Mr. Stanhope's class always identify with "those low Irish"—when he considered, too, all the projects which that gentleman had formed for his son, and how much, in spite of his cold, stern nature, he was bound up in his boy, he trembled for the consequences, doubtful, as it was, whether the pride or the affection of Mr. Stanhope would gain the mastery, and fearing very much that his pride would gain the day.

Father Eustace still exhorted, and Edwin still hesitated, when an accident brought about the so much desired, but so dreaded explanation. Edwin inadvertently one day left exposed upon his table a book on the Catholic Church, belonging to Father Eustace, with that gentleman's name on the title page. On returning to his room he was much alarmed to find that it was gone, and finding, on inquiry, that neither his sister nor any of the servants had removed it, he came to the conclusion that his father had entered the room in his absence, had found the book upon his table, and had taken it away. The belief was confirmed by the conduct of his father when they met as usual at dinner. Mr. Stanhope scarcely spoke during the meal, but Edwin, without daring to look at his father, felt that his eyes were continually fixed upon him in a sad and very painful manner, and he heard him sigh deeply several times. As soon as dinner was over, Mr. Stanhope retired at once to his private room, and as Edwin and Maria sat together in mournful silence, they heard their father pacing hurriedly backward and forward in his room, which adjoined the one in which they sat. Poor Edwin listened with a beating heart to the tread that seemed to him to announce that the stern, cold man within was steeling himself for the coming battle, and crushing every more tender feeling as ruthlessly as the hasty foot trampled upon the ground beneath it. Backwards and forwards, backwards and forwards, without cessation and without rest, crushing and strangling without mercy the promptings of the father's heart—fighting the battle of pride and haughtiness, even against his own flesh and blood—feeding the evil passions of his own stern, undisciplined heart, holding converse with the busy devil at work within him, till pride and haughty rage were boiling up in his soul, and every fall of the impatient foot cried out to the trembling boy in the adjoining room: "Oppose me not, dare not to place your will in opposition to mine, or I will crush you; crush you even to the dust, were you ten times dearer to me than you are; crush you, though my own heart wither and perish with you. Crush!—crush!—crush!"

For four long hours Edwin listened to the pacing of that foot with its never-varying tale of pride, and power, and will. Maria tried in vain to soothe him. He kissed her when she came and hung over him; but he put her gently away, and turned to the communion of his own sad thoughts. When she begged of him to tell her what was wrong between himself and papa,

he could only answer that she would soon know all now, and beg of her never to love him less, whatever might come between them. He had retired to his own room for the night, and was sitting buried in thought, thinking of nothing, perhaps, in particular, but weighed down and oppressed with the dreary foreboding of what was about to happen, when a servant came to tell him that his father wished to see him before he retired to rest.

For a moment Edwin felt sick and dizzy. He then threw himself upon his knees, and besought the Almighty God, with all the fervor of his young heart, to give him strength to be faithful, now that the dreaded moment had come, and, after spending some moments thus, he rose and waited for a short time, in order to try to compose himself a little, and still the beatings of his anxious and fluttering heart, before he entered his father's room; and God be with him now to strengthen and sustain the brave young heart against the iron will that is determined to conquer or to crush it.

CHAPTER X.

FATHER AND SON.—THE CONFLICT.—A FATHER'S CURSE.

On entering the room, Edwin found his father seated at his table, with a large Bible open before him, and the lamp shining full upon his face. It was deadly pale, and looked so cold, so stern, and so passionless, as it turned towards him as he entered that it seemed more like the face of one who was dead and who had passed away from worldly cares, than of one whose heart was at that very moment a volcano of burning and consuming passion. He did not speak, but motioning Edwin to a chair, for a moment father and son sat gazing on each other without the power or the will to utter a word. There was, however, a twitching about the bloodless and compressed lips of Mr. Stanhope, that told too well of the struggle that was going on within, and that was gnawing his very heart, as he sat looking on the pale and trembling boy before him. He looked like a man who, under the mastery of some strong and ruling passion, had grasped with an iron hand everything that was nearest and dearest to his heart, and tearing it ruthlessly and mercilessly away, had stamped upon it in the wildness and extremity of his madness, leaving himself all weak and fainting from the very violence of the conflict. He had thought that he had mastered himself perfectly; but he was wrong, for his voice quivered and faltered for an instant as he addressed his son—the centre of so much pride, and of so many hopes, about perchance, to be withered and blasted for ever.

"Edwin, my child," he commenced, I have sent for you in order to question you on a subject of the greatest importance, and with which *my* happiness certainly, and I would fain believe *yours* are very intimately connected. Some two months ago I heard, much to my surprise, from my friend, Mr. Seymour, that whilst staying at his house last Christmas, you had accompanied his son and some other young people to the Popish chapel on Christmas eve. I say I was surprised to hear this, because I know you too well to suppose that you would have gone there out of mere idle curiosity, and I could not think how you could have been so foolish as to expose yourself to the slightest danger of being led astray and perverted by those ensnaring and captivating ceremonies, with which the Romish Church too often entraps young and ardent imaginations such as yours. Since then, I have been warned by several friends to have an eye upon you, as your tendencies are decidedly Romish, and that you are in danger of perversion. I did not mention these reports to you, Edwin, because I felt sure that no member of my family, much less my own son, could so far forget what was due to me and to himself as to become a miserable apostate from the church of his baptism in order to join one so fallen, so degrading in its doctrines and practices, and so idolatrous, as that of Rome," continued Mr. Stanhope, in his most lofty and haughty manner, "I could not believe either that my own boy upon whom I have lavished

all my love and tenderness, could be guilty of such an utter want of confidence towards me as all this supposes, and that he could accompany me to church on every Sunday and yet be a pervert and an apostate in heart. I noticed with deepest concern your worn and anxious look for some time past, and I was often alarmed lest it might be caused by this affair; but still I could not believe it, and I endeavored to account for it by your delicate health and constitutional weakness. Hence though I heard these reports, and though I was both alarmed and pained by them, still I had too much confidence in you, and I did not mention them. But,"—and he grew paler as he proceeded—"I this morning entered your room by accident, and, to my astonishment, and I will say horror, I found upon your desk this book, containing an exposition of the doctrines of the Romish Church, underlined, and with notes in your hand-writing. It would be impossible for me to tell you all I felt for I trembled to see what appeared to be such a confirmation of what I have heard. I took the book to my own room, I have waited until I was calm and composed before I spoke to you, and now I am waiting and anxious to hear you disclaim all that has been said, and explain how it was that I found such a book as this in your room."

He paused and looked steadily at Edwin, who raised his eyes, full of tears, to his father's face, as he answered:—"Excuse me, papa, but I cannot explain this; or rather," he added, as his voice faltered more and more, "I hope you will not press me to do so at present."

As Edwin uttered these words, so confirmatory of all that he dreaded, Mr. Stanhope turned deadly pale with suppressed passion, and bit his lip to repress the angry words that were about to rush forth. He was, at least externally, calm, but his voice was fearfully stern, and his look most determined, as he answered:—

"Edwin, I am still your father,—at least yet; do not trifle with me, for I am determined, and nothing shall move me. Dearly as I love you, and God alone knows how dearly that is, although, perhaps, I have never been able to show that love as much as I could desire, I would not allow even you to question my authority, and by that authority I request, nay, I demand to know where you obtained the book I found upon your desk, and why I found it there?"

"Since you insist upon knowing," answered Edwin, very slowly, and with a voice trembling with fear and anxiety, "I am bound to answer. The book belongs to a Catholic priest of the adjoining chapel, and it was borrowed by me in order to assist me in prosecuting my inquiries into the nature of the doctrines held by the Catholic Church."

Mr. Stanhope started as though he had been stung by a serpent, but, although his fingers twitched convulsively as he grasped the arms of the chair in which he sat, he kept down as yet the raging passion that was in him.

"And may I ask, sir, how you made the acquaintance of this Popish priest, who, true to his creed, seems about to rend asunder the members of this hitherto happy family?" demanded Mr. Stanhope, in his sternest and coldest manner.

"Papa," answered Edwin, who, now that the ice was broken, began to feel more collected and courageous, "papa, you do Father Eustace grievous wrong. The acquaintance commenced from me. You do me wrong, too, in supposing that I have been influenced in the change which has come over me by the grandeur of the ceremonial of the Catholic Church. It is grand," he continued, "but it has but little share in my change of feeling, for I have witnessed it only once. From my childhood I have been dissatisfied with the state I was in. I have been chilled and beaten down by the coldness and emptiness of the religion I professed. I have been perplexed and alarmed by the contradictions and discrepancies of her belief. For years I have found none to counsel me, none to explain what perplexed and alarmed me. When I received the rite of confirmation, when I approached the communion, I had no definite idea of what I was engaged in, and I could find none to enlighten me. I wept, and I thought, and I prayed, and still all was doubt, and dread, and darkness; and what wonder,

then, if, when, for the first time I entered a Catholic Church, and beheld at least the appearance of that which I had so earnestly sought and desired, I took means of investigating and discovering whether the appearance were indeed the reflection of the reality? With every prejudice against it, with the fear of your anger, dear papa, before me, with every natural instinct to remain as I am, I have studied, oh! how deeply, the claims of the Catholic Church to my allegiance, and, in spite of myself, I have been driven to confess in my own heart that there must be one true Church on earth, and that the Catholic Church alone can claim the title. O dear papa," he continued, his cheeks flushed with excitement, and his large, dark eyes gleaming with animation, "if you knew the sleepless nights this has cost me, if you knew how I have wept and prayed, if you knew how I have striven at times against this, if you knew how I have trembled as I thought of your anger, if you knew half my sufferings, my own dear papa, you would take pity on me and forgive me; you would not look upon me so coldly and so sternly; you would not turn away from me as you do. In all my life before, you know, papa, that I have never contradicted you, that I have never crossed you, and I tremble as I do it now; but I cannot help it, oh! indeed, I cannot. I cannot stifle my conscience; I cannot be deaf to its voice, and that voice tells me that I must be a Catholic, whatever it may cost me. I have not been a hypocrite, for I have longed to tell you this, but I durst not do it—I durst not, dear papa; and oh! forgive me for it. I durst not face your anger; and, moreover, I had not made up my mind, and I was not sure that I should ever become a Catholic. Father Eustace has always pressed me to tell you, and I have often crept down part of the way to your room to throw myself at your feet and tell you all; but my heart has always failed me, and I have had to turn back, weeping and sad, to my own room; but now that you know all, O dear papa, say that you forgive me—say that you will not cast me off. I will try to love you more and more, and to be more obedient than I have been. I will never cross you again, and it shall be the sole object of my life to render you happy. O papa, my own dear papa, don't look at me so sternly, but say that you forgive me, or it will kill me."

For the dark stern face was awful now—awful as it worked and quivered in every feature, as the eye glared upon the boy, who sat before it with his face buried in his hands, and the tears streaming down upon the floor—awful, as the forehead swelled as if it would burst—awful, as the lips, which were bitten till they bled, twitched and quivered even then—awful as the perspiration ran in cold drops along it, giving it an appearance still more ghastly and dreadful to behold.

And thus they sat for a moment, father and son, neither of them speaking, and the heavy silence only broken by the sobs of Edwin, who wept as if his heart would break, as he trembled beneath the gaze that was bent upon him—a gaze that told of pain and bitter grief—of blasted hopes and blighted expectations—that spoke but too plainly of the fearful struggle that was going on within, rending his very heart as he grappled with it—but telling, above all, of a fearful, withering pride, that would crush whatever opposed it, but never! never! bend or yield.

When Mr. Stanhope broke the painful silence, it was with a voice that was hoarse and husky. "Edwin Stanhope," at length he exclaimed, in a low and quivering tone, "have you done, sir? I was not prepared for this, and you have taken me by surprise. You have learned your lesson well, sir, and you do credit to your instructors," he added, sarcastically. "Yes, you have taken me by surprise; for, when I summoned you here, I did not expect to find you so far gone in your delusions. I did not expect to find you so far lost to your duty, sir. Of course, I shall not presume to enter the lists of controversy with you, as you are, doubtless, much more learned than I am in these matters; but, at least, rash boy, allow me to call in Mr. Grant, he may drive these mad and foolish notions from your mind.

"Papa," answered Edwin, weeping, but still firmly, "again you wrong me. I have learnt no lesson—I have received no

instruction, save the recommendation to treat you with every respect and confidence. If I have failed in this, as, perhaps, I have, the fault is all my own. I must decline to see Mr. Grant, as I cannot perceive any good result to be attained from such a meeting. Surely, after seventeen years of study, I ought to know the religion I have so long professed; and though Mr. Grant might beat me in argument, as no doubt he would, still he would never convince me. No, papa, no power on earth could do that, and therefore why should I see him?"

"Your pride and presumption are intolerable, sir. You dare to pass judgment upon me, and upon your ancestors. We have all gone wrong, forsooth, and you, and you alone, are right. How dare you use such language to me, sir?—how dare you speak to me in such terms?—how dare you so utterly forget and despise all that is due to me, and to those who have gone before me?"

"Dear papa, I do not forget what is due to you. I love and I honor you above all the world. There is nothing that I would not do to show my love and reverence for you, and when you accuse me of having failed in this, you wrong me; you wrong your own heart too. I pass no judgment upon you, papa, or upon any one. Your belief is a matter between yourself and God, even as mine is. No, I pass no judgment upon you, I only judge myself, and I know and feel—oh! how intimately,—that I must either become a Catholic or lose my own immortal soul; and I know—oh! I am sure, dear, dear papa—that you who have ever loved me so much, can never ask me to do that?"

"Enough, sir,—enough of this. My soul ought to be as dear to me as yours is to you, and I have no doubt of being able to save it, even in the church which you, in your wisdom, so much despise," responded Mr. Stanhope, coldly and haughtily. "But," and his voice involuntarily faltered as he spoke, and the tears rushed into his eyes, despite all his efforts to restrain them, "but have you well considered the consequences of the mad step which you seem so determined to take? Have you well pondered the strength of my will? And do you suppose that I will ever submit to the degradation you are about to heap upon our hitherto unsullied name? Have you considered my pride and my position, and do you suppose that I will ever put it in the power of a jibing mob to point at me with the finger of scorn, and to say of me that I allowed my own son to become a miserable apostate? Have you considered how many hopes, how many expectations are concentrated in you, and are you prepared to blast them all for the gratification of a mere whim? Are you prepared to throw away, as a thing not worth having, the love that I have ever lavished upon you? Have you considered that I will die rather than yield to your folly? Tell me," he continued, passionately, "tell me, have you considered all this, and are you prepared to take upon yourself the consequences of this act?"

"Papa," cried Edwin frantically, falling upon his knees, "I have considered all this, and the thought has nearly killed me. I cannot bear it much longer, and indeed I am willing to die. If you cast me off, it will kill me, oh! indeed it will. I cannot live without your love, and in the knowledge that you have disowned me; but," he continued, sobbing till his voice was hardly audible, "I must become a Catholic. Oh! indeed I must—I must—I must; and may God support me in the struggle."

"Enough, sir," cried Mr. Stanhope, rising madly from his chair, and stamping passionately upon the ground. "Enough sir! go your way, and I will go mine. You have cast me off for a mere whim, and now I disown and disclaim you. You are no son of mine. Henceforward we are strangers. I will tear the very image of you from my heart; or, if ever I think of you, it shall be but to nourish my hate for the vile apostate who has forsaken and betrayed me. I will trample upon every feeling of love that may linger in my heart towards you, and I will cast it from me as a base and loathsome thing, and by the God that is above us, I will never look upon your face again."

And roughly disengaging himself from the arms that sought

to wind themselves about his knees, and spurning the falling boy with his foot, as though he were something infinitely hateful and loathsome to him, with the fearful curse that seemed to blanch the very lips that uttered it, he rushed madly from the room, where his only son was stretched, faint, and bleeding upon the floor.

A short time, and there was a great hurrying to and fro through the stately house, for the servants, hearing a heavy fall, had rushed into their master's room, and found him in a fit upon the floor; whilst Edwin was laid upon his bed, with the blood trickling from a cut in his temple, and only sufficiently conscious to know that a gentle hand ever and anon stanching his wound, and that two loving arms wound round his neck; that a soft young cheek was resting by the side of his, and a dear and well-known voice whispering in his ear, "Edwin, my own darling, whatever may happen, there is at least one heart will remain faithful to you, and love you dearly as it ever did."

And once again, may God be with the brave young heart that has been stricken down even by a father's hand, but that is neither crushed nor conquered yet.

CHAPTER XI.

COMFORT IN GRIEF.—A MINISTERING ANGEL.—THE PROUD MAN'S PAIN.

It was a month before Edwin was sufficiently recovered from the shock occasioned by the interview with his father, narrated in the last chapter, to be able to leave his room. He had received, too, a rather severe, though not dangerous cut on the forehead, by falling against a chair as his father cast him from him, and this, added to the intensity of his feelings, had acted very strongly on his already weak and enfeebled system; and for three weeks he was unable to rise from his bed. During the whole of this time there was a soft and genial face for ever hovering round his bed like an angel of comfort and consolation, smoothing so softly and soothingly the pillow which supported his weary and aching head, dressing with such a light and skilful touch his wounded forehead; holding such cool and pleasant draughts to his parched and burning lips, kissing him with such deep and heartfelt love, and ever and anon, when he groaned the most heavily, and tossed the most restlessly, whispering so lovingly in his ear the comforting words he had heard on that dreadful night, "Edwin, my own darling, whatever may happen, remember that you can never be less dear to me than you are now." And, oh! how often during the time he lay upon his bed of pain, as the stern dark face rose up before him as he had seen it last when it was quivering with rage and indignation, and the remembrance of that fearful curse came thrilling through his frame, would he turn to the fair young girl that watched beside his bed, and laying his poor weary head upon her bosom, would wind his arms around her neck, and as her golden ringlets fell upon him as she bent over him, would sob himself to sleep upon that gentle, faithful heart; and, after dreaming of angels and of rest, would wake to see those same mild eyes looking into his, with such a depth of love and faithfulness in every glance, and to feel those pure and gentle lips pressed to his, with love so holy and so innocent, that even pitying angels, as they hovered round, might fear no danger to their own unsullied holiness as they gazed upon the brother's and sister's love.

Maria knew all now, and had received from Edwin a full account of his own change, and of the interview with his father. She listened calmly and quietly to his story, with his hand clasped in hers, and only interrupting him by stooping down to kiss him when his voice faltered more than usual, or when, with all the quickness of a woman's perception, she perceived that he was coming to something painful and distressing. When, after describing his interview with his father, and their dreadful parting, he finished his story and turned away his head to hide his tears, she bent her face down to his as it reclined hidden by his hands upon the arm of a couch on which

they sat, and after a moment's silence began to cheer and comfort him.

"Edwin, my own dear brother," she commenced, "I am both surprised and sorry to hear your story. I am sorry, my darling," she continued, seeing that he was about to speak again, "because I cannot conceal from myself how much suffering there is in store for you, and if for you, for me too, without you forsake these opinions, which I know you too well to suppose that you will do. I am sorry, of course, that you should deem it necessary to take this step and become a Catholic, because I necessarily think it a false one, and one which is not required. Why cannot we be as we have been? However, Edwin, I pity you, but I do not blame you. I have heard your story, and I could as soon question the fact of my own existence as your sincerity; and whatever you may do, I, at least, shall never blame you. You little know, my own darling, darling brother, how dear you are to me, and how proud I have ever been of you; and believe me," she continued, weeping as she spoke, "you never can be less dear to me than you are at this moment. Others may forsake you—I never can. Others may cast you off—I never can. You may become less dear to others, but to me you can never be anything but my own dear, darling boy, my pride, my love, my joy." And again the pitying angels looked gently on as she sealed the promise of her fidelity. "I am very much afraid of papa's anger," she continued, "for I know it to be dreadful. He knows that you are ill, for he sees the doctor as he calls every day; but he has never been to your room, and he has never mentioned your name since that dreadful night. You know, dear, that he had a fit on the same night, but he soon recovered; but I know, we all know and see, how deeply he feels this. He looks much older, and his face is so deadly pale and wan, that it is painful to behold. Several times when I have been sitting with him during your illness, I have watched him and marked the workings of his features, and I know, oh! how well, that he was thinking of you; and I have waited until I saw his features soften, and the tears begin to trickle down his pale face, and then I have gone over to him, and putting my arms around his neck, I have taken courage to whisper your name, but, oh! Edwin, he has always turned upon me a look so cold, so stern, so unforgiving, and so wild, that I could not utter another word, but only throw myself upon a couch and weep, as I saw him rush hurriedly from the room. Several nights he has never gone to rest at all, for I have heard him pacing his room during the live-long night, and once, when you were asleep, I stole down to his room, and I laid my face against his door and listened, and I heard him sigh and groan so deeply and so bitterly, that my poor heart was almost broken as I listened. I hope he will relent, but, dearest, we must be prepared for the worst; and you know how stern and inflexible he is. Mr. Grant, too, has been here several times, and I know that he has advised papa to be very *firm*—*firm* is the word he used; but, oh! I know that it means something more severe. But, my own dear," she continued, as Edwin began to weep and sob afresh, "do be comforted. We will throw ourselves at his feet, and I will plead for you; he cannot reject me; and we shall all be happy yet." She tried to speak in a gay and cheerful voice, but, poor girl, it was a sad failure, and so she only clasped the weeping boy nearer and closer to her faithful heart, and bent over him to kiss his wounded brow; her golden hair, as it fell about him, seeming to shine with a reflection of the glory that was shed around them by the pitying angels who were gazing on the scene.

CHAPTER XII.

CHRISTMAS DAY, AND NOT A "MERRY ONE."

It was Christmas Eve again, and Edwin, who was stronger and more composed, after many trembling and anxious consultations with Maria, had come to the determination of going down stairs the next day, in hopes of meeting his father, whom

he had not seen since the night they had parted in so painful and dreadful a manner. He was full of anxiety as to this meeting, and during his recovery it had formed the subject of many conversations between himself and his sister. Maria was, or feigned to be, very sanguine as to its results. She tried to persuade Edwin that when his papa saw him again, and saw that his mind was made up, he would relent and forgive him, and that everything would be as it had been before this unhappy disagreement. Poor Edwin was less sanguine; but encouraged by Father Eustace, to whom, as soon as he was sufficiently recovered, he had sent a detailed account of all that had happened, he determined to meet his father as if nothing had occurred between them.

Christmas Day came, and a dark rainy day it was. From the window of his room Edwin watched his father descend with the old haughty tread the steps of the house, and enter his carriage. He saw the servant place the large prayer-book upon the cushion, and as his father bent forward, for a moment, to give some trifling direction to the attendants, Edwin peered anxiously into his face, to see whether, perchance, the Christmas time might not have left some mark of softening pity and forgiveness on it; but he turned away with a sickening heart. Much paler, much more wan and careworn, but colder, sterner, prouder than ever. He saw his father's eye fall, for a moment, on the empty seat which he had always been accustomed to occupy on those occasions, and as he marked the cloud which immediately passed over his face, it seemed to fall like a pall upon the newly-formed hopes of a reconciliation. When the carriage had driven away, and he was sitting in his silent room, listening to the rain that was beating with such a wailing sound against the casement, and with the events of the last twelvemonths all crowding upon his mind at once with a fearful distinctness, one figure, however, always being foremost in the picture—a cold, stern face, which suddenly changed and became livid with passion, as it uttered a fearful curse that froze his blood as he did but think of it, poor Edwin grew so melancholy and so sad that he was fain to leave the companionship of his own bitter thoughts. He was fain to think about the smiling church and its cheerful lights, the fragrant incense, and the swelling strain, and sweeter, holier, and fuller of consolation than all the rest, the lowly crib that seemed to beckon him to draw near and look upon the smiling babe who raised His little hands with such a look of pitying love, and as he gazed he felt his heart grow light and strong. He felt that the good Jesus had, indeed, sought out His wandering lamb, and when he arose from his knees he felt that now he could leave all beside to follow the Good Shepherd, whom he had sought for so long, but was about to find at last; and as the dinner hour drew nigh, it was with comparative calmness that he descended to the drawing-room.

Maria rose to meet him as he entered, and greeted him cheerfully as she led him to a chair. They sat counting the minutes with palpitating hearts, though they tried hard to seem cheerful and unconcerned. The happiness of two young hearts is now depending on a father's word, and surely at this Christmas time the icy heart will melt, the iron will unbend, and recording angels shall gladly write the words that will bring comfort and joy to those that so much need it. He was at church this morning; he heard the sacred words, "Glory be to God on high, and on earth peace to men of good will;" and he cannot steel his heart and close the bowels of compassion against his own offspring. There has been too much of rigor and of suffering already, and on this day of universal love and happiness, he, too, will relent, and give the kiss of peace, and there shall be merry Christmas at the hearth which is now so lone and desolate; and the gratitude of two young hearts shall amply pay him for his conquered pride and vanquished will. A step is heard approaching; it must be he. Poor Edwin turns deadly pale, and rises, as the hand is already upon the latch of the door. He faintly approaches to meet him as he enters, with the kiss upon his lips, and the prayer for pardon upon his tongue, and his eyes looking more than tongue can ever express. Another moment, and—oh! let the recording

angels turn away with very shame and sorrow. Let them not write it down that the father's heart is unforgiving yet, and that his children are less dear to him than his own devilish pride and never-unbending will. Let them not record the cold and haughty message which the menial enters to deliver; but let them leave him in the room which he will not forsake. Let them leave him, even on a day like this; leave him in his coldness, and his darkness, and his pride; leave him to the thoughts that are gnawing away the heart upon which they feed; leave him, even to himself, and let them rather record, with pens of gold, how the brother and sister, locked in each other's arms, wept over their ruined hopes as if their hearts would break, and wept for the unbending harshness of an unforgiving heart. Let them rather record in brightest letters the words frequently murmured during that bitter night, "Edwin, my own darling, I, at least, will never forsake you—never love you less, my poor, poor boy." And now that the evening bells are ringing through the air, and men are taking advantage of the clearing weather to hurry to the house of God—now, while many a hearth is bright and gay, and love is speaking in many an eye, let the cold, stern man think of the "Merry Christmas" that is held around his hearth. Let him gloat over the work of his hands, and exult in the strength of his will; but, for God's sake, let him forget that it is the Merry Christmas time. Above all, let him forget the solemn words he heard not many hours ago: "Glory be to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will."

CHAPTER XIII.

A VICTORY AND A NOTABLE ONE, IF IT BE WORTH THE PRICE.

After the death-blow to his hopes which he had now received, we may easily imagine that poor Edwin passed a wretched and sleepless night. He arose next morning weak and languid, and had scarcely finished dressing when he received a message summoning him to his father's private room. He obeyed at once, and entered the room comparatively calm, for he felt that the worst was passed, that he had nothing to hope, and that it only remained for him to support anything that was to follow with as much resignation as possible.

With the sweet names of Jesus and Mary upon his lips, he turned the latch and entered the room. His father was standing behind his desk, very pale, but to all appearance perfectly calm. He gave no sign of recognition as his son entered the room, but stood motionless and rigid as a statue. He did not even look at him, but, with his eyes fixed upon the opposite wall, in a cold, harsh voice, as if he were transacting a piece of business of the very least importance, and one which was scarcely worthy of even so much attention, he merely said, "I have sent for you, sir, to learn from your own lips whether you are determined to persevere in the absurd and outrageous line of conduct which you have thought fit to embrace?"

"Dear papa, if——"

"I desire no explanation, sir; I merely wish an answer to my question."

"Papa, I am determined, because no other course is open to me."

"Then, sir, the sooner you seek another home the better, for henceforward you are a stranger here."

And so they parted, father and son. Edwin would have taken his father's hand, but the proud man turned haughtily and sternly away, and so, without another word, without another look, with all the love of so many years cast away and trampled upon by the demon of pride and sectarian intolerance, he allowed the door to close upon his son, and listened to the retreating footsteps which told him too plainly, alas! that he was alone, and that he had needlessly cast away from him the priceless jewel of a young heart's love and tenderness.

And yet he had scarcely expected that it would have come to this. He had persuaded himself that, by speaking thus briefly

and harshly to his son, he would have succeeded in breaking down Edwin's determination to embrace the Catholic faith, and he found himself mistaken. He had thought it impossible that his son would take him at his word, and give up everything rather than that which he felt himself bound to embrace; and for a moment he felt stunned as the door closed upon Edwin's retreating figure. He would have given worlds to recall those words, "Henceforward you are a stranger here;" but his pride would not submit, and he *could* not do it. Even now he could scarcely believe that they had parted; he could scarcely believe that Edwin would leave him, and he sat listening most anxiously to every step that he heard in the passage outside, thinking it to be that of Edwin, who was coming to announce his submission to his father's will; and, oh! how his proud heart sickened as the step passed on and he found himself still alone—alone, thinking of his boy and of all that was past. One, two, three hours, and now he knew that Edwin *would* not submit, and he rang his bell. He sat down, with a strange calmness upon his face, to his desk, and slowly and methodically opening it, took thence a note for a £100, and put in an envelope. He was about to direct it, when a sudden thought seemed to strike him, and he threw the pen hastily away, and left the envelope without any address. When the servant entered, although he peered curiously into his master's face to discover how the proud man bore his trouble, he could find no mark of discomposure; all was cold, and stern, and proud, and his master's voice was firm and steady as usual, as he handed the envelope to him.

"Johnson," he said, "take this to——" My son, he was going to add, but he suddenly stopped as if something were choking him. "Take this to Mr. Edwin Stanhope, and inquire from him when it will suit his convenience to depart hence, in order that you may procure a conveyance for him; and, Johnson," he continued, as the servant was leaving the room, "you will remember that Mr. Edwin Stanhope is henceforward a stranger here; and, should he call, you will not admit him without my express orders and permission."

"Henceforward a stranger here!" He was glad when the servant left the room, with a low bow, for he had marked the pitying look of the man's face; and with all his pride and haughty self-will he felt himself humbled and abased; he felt himself degraded even to the feet of his own menial, and he was glad to be alone.

We shall not attempt to describe the parting between the brother and the sister. There are things too holy and too painful to be described by any human pen, much less by a pen so weak and feeble as ours. We will rather draw a veil over the sorrowful scene, and leave to angel hands to record the parting vows of faithfulness which they uttered, clinging round each other's necks—leave to angel hands to record the love and watchful care with which she packed his books and all his little treasures—and promised so faithfully to write to him as often as she could. Above all, we will draw a veil over that parting moment, when their young lips were pressed so wildly in long and pure embrace: whilst their weeping eyes spoke all that which their sorrow stricken tongues refused to say.

And now, if bluff old Mr. Brown has condescended to follow our little story so far, we have no doubt that the worthy old gentleman is in a state of great satisfaction, and that he is loud in his commendations of the firm and determined manner in which Mr. Stanhope has acted in regard to his rebellious and undutiful son.

It cannot be denied that Mr. Stanhope has gained a great, a notable victory. Rather than sacrifice one iota of his pride and haughty will, he has sacrificed and ruthlessly cast away from him the dearest object he possessed in the world; and for what? That he might not appear to have given way in this conflict with his child—that men might not be able to say that he had allowed his own son to thwart him, even in a matter where salvation was at stake. A great victory, surely! a notable victory! His own heart may wither and grow cold—his son, his only son, may be cast out upon the world, and

there be none to take his place; but what of that? He has conquered—the supremacy of his will has been vindicated, his pride has not given way, his character is unblemished in the eyes of the world; and what is his own happiness, or that of his own child, in comparison with such a victory as this? A great victory, surely! Poor fool! Well may old Brown rub his hands, and chuckle till he be black in the face. Well may he go about from house to house amongst his friends, to tell them this wonderful tale of a father who loves his pride better than his child. Yet it is not such an uncommon tale after all. It has happened before, and probably will happen again; and therefore old Brown need not chuckle quite so much over it, nor expose himself to be carried off by an attack of apoplexy resulting from the exuberance of his feelings. Spite of all his commendations, could the worthy old man transport himself in imagination to Mr. Stanhope's lonely room, and see how that proud face quivers and grows pale as he listens to the suppressed voices that are bidding a tearful and sorrowful farewell to their dear young master, and could he see how, as after listening to the very last to a carriage as it drives away, Mr. Stanhope locks the door of his room, and lays his weary head upon his desk, and groans and weeps through the live-long night for his lost, lost boy, even he, worthy old Mr. Brown, might, perhaps, begin to doubt whether such a victory was worth purchasing at such a price.

CHAPTER XIV.

A NEW HOME—FATHER EUSTACE FINDS IT TOO MUCH FOR HIM.—
AID IS NEAREST WHEN NEED IS GREATEST.—FRANK SEYMOUR
AND HIS TALE.

Poor Edwin, half dead with grief and sorrow for the present, and with anxiety for the future, after leaving the house which was now no longer his home, drove at once to the residence of Father Eustace, to whom he had despatched a hurried note containing a brief account of what had happened. He had had no time as yet to think of the future. He felt that all that had been passed away, and that there was a broad chasm between himself and most of those who had been nearest and dearest to him. He felt that the world—the dark, dreary world—was all before him, and he saw not where he should find a resting-place for his weary feet. Bashful and retiring as he was, so little fitted to fight his way in the world which was now before him, so full of the enthusiasm and romantic feeling which are necessary ingredients in natures such as his, it is little wonder if he were anxious and distressed. And yet he felt happier than he had been for some months past. The step had been taken, and had been taken for *eternity*; the rest was merely *temporal*, and he felt that God would carry him through it all. His deepest, keenest sorrow was for the unforgiving harshness of his father; but it was a sorrow without anger, a sorrow which had for its object not his own wrongs, and the harsh treatment he had received, but the thought that past love could be so easily put away—that the memory of the happy days gone by could be so ruthlessly trampled upon, and himself cast upon the world so sternly and so proudly, for daring to do that which he found himself bound to do under the pain of his own damnation. Now that they had parted, his heart warmed more than it had ever done before in their happiest days towards the proud, stern man; and if he wept as he thought of him, they were, in truth, tears of forgiving sorrow—tears that in the sight of God heaped burning coals on the unforgiving heart that had cast him forth.

The sudden stoppage of the vehicle recalled him to himself from the thoughts in which he had been plunged, and, looking from the window, he saw that they had arrived at the door of the residence of Father Eustace. Edwin knocked very timidly; for, although he knew much of the goodness of Father Eustace, he felt very shy and awkward in coming to him thus, an outcast and a wanderer. He knew very well, however, how kindly the good old priest would receive him, but he was altogether unprepared for the reception which he *did* receive. He saw the

door open quickly; he saw the benevolent pitying face of him who opened it; he saw the outstretched arms and the eager look; he felt those arms fold him again and again to as warm a heart as ever beat in human breast, and he saw and felt no more till he found himself in Father Eustace's little room, sitting in the softest place on the simple couch, with the same kind arms clasping him closer and closer still, and pillowing his aching head, as tenderly as his own mother might have done, upon his breast. It was too much; and, as he listened to the soothing voice that whispered so gently in his ear, "My poor boy, my dear, dear child, you are at home here. There, there, don't cry so my child; don't give way so much; you will be happy here; this is your home till you can find a better; Father Eustace will never forsake you;" and as he felt the arms that pressed him so tenderly again and again, the forced restraint gave way, and, after trying several times to kiss one of the hands that clasped his, but trying in vain, it was always most perversely drawn away, he laid his head down upon the friendly breast and sobbed without restraint. Father Eustace did not endeavor to check him, for he knew that it would do him good to relieve his feelings in this manner; very soon, however, it became too much for Father Eustace too, for, after his countenance had undergone some very curious contortions, he several times blew his nose very loudly and very ostentatiously, as if he had suddenly discovered that he had taken a very bad cold; but, finding this unavailing, he very simply put his handkerchief aside altogether, and allowed the tears to run down his kind old face without control, as if he were not in the least ashamed of them, and as if they were not a disgrace to his gray hairs; only, ever and anon, as poor Edwin sobbed more violently, he made a mighty effort to recover himself, and succeeded so well that several times he was able to articulate, almost audibly and distinctly, "My poor boy, my brave child, you don't know how dearly poor old Father Eustace loves you. There, there, there; don't cry, that's a dear child." But, unfortunately for the value of his advice, whenever he got thus far he infallibly began to cry himself harder than ever, and so at last he gave it up as a bad business, and did not attempt to speak at all, but contented himself with soothing the weeping boy as best he might without the use of his tongue, which, as is usual with that unruly member, had become altogether rebellious, with this difference, however, that where it generally *will* not be restrained from speaking too much, in this case it absolutely refused to speak at all.

We have often heard, and we believe it to be true, that there are angels always waiting to carry to the face of God such tears as those shed by Father Eustace and poor Edwin on this occasion; but we must wait until we shall have entered "the better land" before we can know how dear, how precious, and how holy they are in His sight, and how carefully the remembrance of them is treasured up in the Divine mind.

Father Eustace would not allow Edwin to speak all that day of what had happened, but next morning, when they were both more composed, they had a long chat about Edwin's future prospects. Edwin told his friend that ever since he had thought about becoming a Catholic he had felt a very strong desire to devote himself to the service of the altar, but that he saw no immediate prospect of carrying his desire into effect; but that whatever he might do at present, he would not willingly lose sight of this object. The answer of Father Eustace filled him with gratitude and joy.

"My child," began Father Eustace, "you have acted throughout this affair with noble courage and resolution, and having thrown yourself so devotedly into the arms of Divine Providence, He, who does not allow a sparrow to fall to the ground without His permission, has not been behindhand with you. Yes, my child, you may say with the holy Psalmist, 'My father and my mother have cast me off, but the Lord hath taken me up.' I confess I have sometimes trembled for your resolution, when I considered the fearful odds opposed to you in this struggle. I dare say you have sometimes wondered this during our intercourse I have never held out to you the slightest prospect of any temporal help or assistance in the event of

your father casting you off, should you become a Catholic. I did so advisedly, for I was anxious, my dear child, that your merit and your crown should suffer no diminution, but that your triumph should be for God alone, and that no man might be able to say that you had one single earthly object to gain in becoming a Catholic. But I did not forget your interests. A few weeks ago, when I perceived that matters were coming to a crisis, and feeling that after the wonderful way in which God had shown His love towards you, that He would most probably call you to the service of His holy altar, I wrote to my ecclesiastical superior, and put your case before him. I, yesterday, about an hour before you came to me, received, providentially I may say, his answer. The first thing you have to do is to get as strong as possible, for you are sadly shattered, my poor child," continued Father Eustace, with some asperity of tone, as if he were thinking rather severely of him who had caused poor Edwin's weakness by his hardness. "Yes, you must get quite strong and well as soon as possible. I'm sure I need not tell you that you are as welcome as a prince to all that my poor dwelling can give you, and for the next few weeks you will live virtually with me; not a word now, or I will not say another syllable of what I have to tell you. I say you will live *virtually* with me; for, thinking that your father might say that I had entrapped you away did you come to me altogether, I have thought it better to take for you a nice little parlor and bedroom in the next street to this, in the house of a good old widow, one of the most fervent members of my congregation; and poor old Mrs. Martin is so proud at the bare notion of having you for a lodger, that she is scarcely able to restrain her exultation within due bounds. She has been here three times already this morning, to ask me when you will be going to her, and what day she is to have everything ready for you. You will come here to mass every day; and of course you will stay and breakfast with me. Then we can take a little walk, and come home for our simple dinner, and if you don't stay to tea with me, why I will go with you, and give poor old Mrs. Martin an opportunity of bringing out her best set of china; and so you see, my child, we shall be always together, whilst at the same time you will be living in your own lodgings. Now, dry those tears immediately," continued Father Eustace, in a very suspicious tone of voice, as Edwin began to show unmistakeable signs of breaking out afresh, "or I shall be quite cross, I declare I shall," he added, getting up and going to the window, which was in itself rather a strange and suspicious proceeding, as the street outside was perfectly quiet, and nothing whatever going on to justify him in looking out so intently. He seemed, too, to experience a slight return of the sudden cold he had taken the day before; for, before he returned to the side of Edwin, he had found it necessary to make a very noisy use of his handkerchief, and when he did return at last, his eyes looked quite red and moist; but we all know that this is one of the effects of a bad cold, and so we have no sufficient grounds for concluding that Father Eustace had been crying again. Perhaps, however, the angels could tell us; and even supposing he had, although no doubt our good friend, bluff old Mr. Brown, might blame him for it, we scarcely could.

"Yes, my child," resumed Father Eustace, "you must spend the next few weeks in quietness and repose. During this time you can prepare yourself to be formally received into the Church, and for the great happiness of your first communion. Then, when you are quite strong and well, you can go to the College of——, which I am authorized to tell you is open to receive you whenever you think fit to enter it. You can spend a few months there, and if you should find that your vocation is not for the Church, it will have done you no harm to have spent some time in the seclusion and retirement of college life. If, on the contrary, you are called to the service of the altar, you can complete your studies there; and so you see, my dear child," continued Father Eustace, as Edwin pressed his hand, and looked all the grateful thankfulness which his tongue refused to speak, "so you see how Providence has been watching over you all this time, and has provided you

with another home in place of the one you have so courageously forsaken for His love. Oh!" continued the good old man, "the wonderful, wonderful ways of Providence—the Providence that reacheth from end to end mightily—that ordereth all things sweetly."

At this juncture the old servant opened the door, and Frank Seymour hurriedly entered, and running up to Edwin, took both his hands in his own, and embraced him most affectionately. After the first salutations were over, Frank turned and paid his respects to Father Eustace.

"I really must apologize sir, for this apparent intrusion, but I am sure you will pardon me; for, having heard of what had happened, I could not rest until I had found my friend Edwin, and taken the first opportunity of assuring him of my deep sympathy with him in his trials and affliction. The fact is papa went up yesterday to call upon Mr. Stanhope, and at once perceived that something serious had happened. When old Johnson, the butler, answered the bell, papa was astonished to see that his eyes were quite red and inflamed, as if he had been crying. 'What is the matter, Johnson?' said papa, 'are you ill?' 'Oh! no, sir, I am quite well,' answered Johnson, laying a strong emphasis upon the 'I'; but poor master Edwin, sir, and here the honest old fellow began to blubber to such an extent that papa declared that it became quite infectious. 'Master Edwin,' cried papa, in great alarm, 'for God's sake what has happened? Is he ill? Is he at home?' 'No' sir, answered Johnson, 'he isn't at home; he has no home now; this is no longer his home, sir, leastways,' he added most emphatically, 'so Mr. Stanhope says, sir.' Papa was so astonished that he could scarcely speak, but after a time he begged Johnson to sit down, and tell him what had happened, Johnson, however, refused to sit down; but turning away his face from papa, and appearing to discover that the brass handle of the door required polishing very much, for he continued rubbing it incessantly, he managed, with many interruptions, to tell papa the whole story. 'You see sir,' concluded Johnson, 'I have lived in this family nearly thirty years now, and I hope I know my place, sir. I don't presume to judge Mr. Stanhope, sir,' he continued, in a tone of voice which insinuated that he did judge him, and severely, too; 'of course, he knows what is best; but you see, sir, that when Master Edwin was a little boy I have carried him on my back so often, and have heard him say so often, too, 'O Johnson, you are a dear old fellow, and I like you very much,' that I cannot help loving him, sir. When his poor mamma was lying dead in the house, and I took him up to see her for the last time, I can't forget, sir, how he put his poor little arms round my old neck, and kissed me, and said that I was very good, and that his dear dead mamma would not forget me, now that she was a bright angel in heaven, and that he would always love me very much; and I can't forget, too, sir,' continued poor old Johnson, blubbing as if his heart were broken, 'how on the night after the funeral, when Mr. Stanhope was locked up in his room, as he is now, poor Master Edwin stole down to me, and fell asleep in my arms, and whispered ever so often in his sleep, 'mamma, dear mamma, poor old Johnson is very good to me, and I love him very much,—'—and here Johnson went behind the door, and papa saw him take his handkerchief from his pocket, and cry like a little child. Papa declares that he was almost as much affected as poor old Johnson during this conversation. 'Yes, sir,' continued Johnson at last, very emphatically, 'I hope I know my place, sir, as I said before, and that it doesn't become me to judge my master, as he ought to know what is best; but although they say that Master Edwin is going to be a Papist, and I am sorry for it, still I can't forget and I don't want to forget how good and loving he has always been to me, and if he had become a Turk, I wouldn't have turned him out: but of course Mr. Stanhope knows what is best; but you see, sir, I can't forget, and I don't want to forget. Oh dear! Oh dear! Poor Master Edwin, poor Master Edwin, my poor boy, my poor young master!'

"When Johnson had finished his story, papa sent up a message desiring to see Mr. Stanhope, but, although the ser-

vant knocked repeatedly, and although he heard his master groaning inside, there was no answer; and papa came home after asking old Johnson if he knew where you had gone, and learning from him that he had given orders for the cab to drive here by your directions. I saw that something was wrong with papa, for he scarcely spoke during dinner, and instead of staying some time in the dining-room, as he usually does, he came up almost immediately to the drawing-room, and when we were all sitting round the fire, wondering what had happened to make papa so silent and gloomy, even at the Christmas time, he suddenly said, 'Frank, my boy, come over here and sit by me, whilst I tell you all a very sorrowful story,' and then in his own dear, hearty, simple way, he told us poor Edwin's tale; 'and, Frank,' he added, clasping my hand, and pressing it very tightly, 'Frank, my boy, I should be very sorry to see you follow Edwin's example; but if you did, I should still be more sorry to see myself following the example of his father. I couldn't do it; God knows I couldn't, and I'm very glad that I couldn't; and go the very first thing in the morning and find out this poor boy, and tell him that he must come here, and stay as long as ever he likes, and that mother and I will make him as welcome and happy as though he were our own;' and thus, sir," concluded Frank, turning to Father Eustace, "you have a true history of the reason of my intrusion on you this morning, and I hope you will use all your influence with my friend, Edwin, to induce him to accept dear papa's invitation."

It would be useless to endeavor to say how much poor Edwin felt this act of spontaneous kindness and consideration; but he was firm in his resolution of remaining where he was for the present, as he knew it was the best position for him in every way; and when Frank had seen more of the kindness of Father Eustace towards Edwin, he ceased to press him, after his friend had promised to come and see them very often.

The two friends and Father Eustace then had a long talk, on various matters, Father Eustace and Frank vying with each other in their efforts to amuse Edwin, and to render him more cheerful and happy; and Frank willingly consented to remain and dine with them, as the good old priest pressed him to do.

The wine-cellar of Father Eustace was not very extensive, either as regarded the quantity it contained, or the variety of his stock; but still, by dint of groping and searching, he managed to produce a bottle of his best; "that," he remarked, "which he brought out only on the very greatest occasions;" and by the time it had gone round once or twice, poor Edwin felt more happy, cheerful, and composed than he had done for many months; and when, next morning, he sat down to write to his sister, he was able to do so in a tone comparatively cheerful and full of hope.

CHAPTER XV.

LIGHT AT LAST.—FEARS.—FRANK SEYMOUR IS VERY RASH.

AFTER remaining two or three days with Father Eustace, Edwin, to the great delight of old Mrs. Martin, removed to his own lodgings. They were very snug and comfortable, and the honest old creature was unwearied in her attention to his wants. Like most of her sex she was a little given to gossip, and when she happened to fall in with any of her friends (and, somehow, this did happen very frequently), the warm-hearted old woman used to wax quite eloquent on the subject of her lodger, and his many virtues, and not a little indignant when she spoke—as she usually did rather freely—about the harshness and pride of his father.

Edwin remained with her about three months, and, with the drawback of his father's continued unrelenting, and his separation from his sister, he began to feel very happy. The tempest had passed away, and the sky was already clearing, and growing very bright. He was in almost hourly communication with his dear friend, Father Eustace, and after having received conditional baptism, and otherwise prepared himself, he had had, on the festival of the Purification of our Blessed Lady,

the inestimable happiness of making his first communion.

We might, indeed, endeavor to describe in some feeble way what Edwin felt on this joyful occasion; but such of our readers as have experienced the same blessing, and more especially such as may have made their first communion in circumstances somewhat similar to those under which Edwin made his, will understand the emotions of his warm young heart on that happy day much better than we could describe them. Those who may not have had this happiness would not understand us, did we take up pages in attempting to portray the feelings of a heart in which faith and love are bright and warm, when, for the first time, its Lord and its God comes to take up His abode within it, comes to make it wholly His, comes to draw it entirely to Himself, to make it the object of His own divine complacency, and the recipient of His choicest graces. Suffice it to say, that when an hour after he had received, Father Eustace softly approached the kneeling boy, and gently touched him on the shoulder, to warn him that he was about to depart, there was a look on his face, as he raised it for a moment from his hands, which the good old priest never forgot,—a look in which faith, and love, and angel-like innocence seemed striving for the mastery,—a look which told of more than words can express; and it was with something very like awe that Father Eustace gazed upon the upturned face, and the gushing eyes, and his own tears flowed fast upon the child of his affections as Edwin softly whispered:—

"Dear Father Eustace, a little longer,—a few moments more,—all is brightness now,—the winter is past, and the rain is over and gone,—I have found Him whom my soul loveth, I have held Him, and will not let Him go,—my heart is breaking with very love and joy,—O leave me with my God. O my Jesus, my God, my all," he murmured, again burying his face in his hands, and bowing himself almost to the earth, as Father Eustace turned softly and even reverently away, leaving the poor lamb with the Good Shepherd, who had sought it out in so wonderful a manner, and brought it home to Himself, to rest upon His gentle breast, and to find there its solace and its recompense for all that was past and gone.

Edwin was most anxious to depart for college as soon as possible, but Father Eustace would not allow him to set out.

"No, my child; you must get very strong and very well before I can allow you to depart," was the continual answer of Father Eustace to all his entreaties to be allowed to go at once. "College life is very severe, and only strong men must undertake it; but rest content awhile, and I and poor old Mrs. Martin will nurse you, and make you strong; and then I will go down with you, and you shall commence your ecclesiastical studies at once."

But although they nursed him tenderly and with never flagging care, poor Edwin found it hard work to get well. He sometimes felt so weary, and his bones ached so much, that he wondered what it could be, and whether he should ever be quite well again. Although Father Eustace pretended to be very confident upon the point, and labored very hard to deceive even himself, still, as he watched the unearthly brilliance which so often shone in the large dark eyes, and the sudden flush which so often mantled on the fair young cheeks—as he listened, too, with sad apprehension to the labored breathing, which was brought on by the least exertion, and saw the struggle which threatened to ensue between body and soul for the conquest of the brave young boy—even he, in the solitude of his own chamber, would often wonder, too, whether poor Edwin would ever be quite well again, or whether the trials and anxieties of the past few months might not have altogether broken down the naturally weak constitution of his young friend. "God forbid that it should be so," would he often whisper to himself, "yet, O my God, he is in Thy hands, and Thou art a loving Father, do what seems best to Thee;" and drying his eyes, he would rejoice his friend—his child as he called him—with a smiling face, and talk to him with a confidence which he himself was far from feeling.

At the end of three months, however, he seemed something stronger, and at last Father Eustace gave way to his entreaties

to be allowed to depart. He had not seen his sister since they parted, for Father Eustace had advised Edwin not to endeavor to do so, for fear of irritating Mr. Stanhope still more. Old Johnson, however, had several times come to see him, and brought him a thousand tender messages from Maria, and had taken back to her a full account of all his future designs, and how happy he was. There was seldom an evening on which Frank Seymour did not walk down to the house of Father Eustace to see his friend, and the three were very pleasant and happy together.

"You see, Edwin," Frank would often say, laughing as he spoke, "I consider that you have been a very foolish, headstrong fellow, and if I treated you as you deserve, I should never come to see you at all, nor expose myself to the danger of being converted against my will by Father Eustace there, who is smiling at the very idea of making a convert of such a stanch Protestant as I am. Your papa declares that it is all the fault of Father Eustace, who has seduced you by his Jesuitical wiles. He declares, too, that when you know more of your adopted religion you will soon be disgusted with it, and that you will be at his feet in less than six months, begging his pardon for your apostasy, as he calls it. I confess that I don't share his opinion on this point, and that only goes to prove what an amiable fellow I must be to come here almost every evening at such a risk, and with so little prospect of gaining you back. But I was always too soft-hearted by half, and you know how much I always liked you, and so, you see, as poor old Johnson says, I can't help it, and I don't want to help it; and if you are only half as happy in your adopted religion as I pray you may be, you will be happy indeed. Meanwhile, I give Father Eustace there full warning that he need not endeavor to try any of his arts on me, for he won't succeed; so, sir," shaking his hand playfully at Father Eustace, "you had better spare yourself any unnecessary trouble."

"God knows, my dear young friend," Father Eustace would answer; "and we shall see. Although you won't let me try to convert you, you can't prevent me from praying for you; and Edwin there, is, I know, determined to take heaven by storm, so you had better take care too, for I am one of those old-fashioned folks who have great faith in the power of prayer, and, perhaps, we shall convert you after all. Take care, my young friend, take care."

CHAPTER XVI.

HOPES REALIZED.—UNRELENTING STILL.—THE PROUD MAN PAYS ANOTHER INSTALMENT OF THE PRICE OF HIS VICTORY.

Edwin was charmed with his college and its peaceful regular routine of life. He entered at once with all the enthusiastic eagerness of his nature into the spirit of the state to which he fondly hoped Almighty God had called him. It was the realization of all that he had desired and longed for during his former life, and now that he had found it, it is no wonder that he took it up most warmly. Perhaps nothing had produced such an effect upon him as the conduct of those amongst whom he had now been thrown. The self-restraint, the modesty, and the retiring but constant piety of his fellow-students, were so different from what he had been accustomed to see in the conduct of the few youths with whom he had mingled, that it produced a most deep and lasting impression upon him. Father Eustace had come down with Edwin, and when he was on the eve of departing, after a stay of a few days, and they were taking leave of each other, Edwin, in answer to a question from Father Eustace, as to whether he felt sure that he was happy said, "Father Eustace, my more than father, I cannot tell you how happy I am; happier far than I ever hoped or deserved to be. If by any chance I could have come here before I was converted, I don't know of anything which would have had such an effect in converting me as the sight of my dear fellow-students; and as a last and parting prayer, I have to ask of you, dear Father Eustace, that you will often implore for me grace not to dishonor the holy state I have chosen,—grace not to be blind to

the bright examples of virtue which I see around me. I shall never forget your goodness, my own dear, dear father, and I pray God to give me an opportunity of showing how much I value and appreciate it."

"My dear child," answered Father Eustace, taking Edwin in his arms, "farewell, farewell. The little kindness that I have shown you is but a tithe of what I would do for you, my noble, brave-hearted boy, were it in my power. God Almighty have you in His holy keeping, and fill you with His grace. Don't forget poor old Father Eustace in your prayers; take great care of your health, and write to me every week. God bless you, my child! God bless you!"

Week succeeded week, and month succeeded month, and they passed away so quickly, because so happily, that Edwin was almost astonished when Father Eustace reminded him, in his usual weekly note, that he had been at college four months. The change of air seemed to have had a beneficial effect upon his health; for, although still very weak and delicate, he thought that he was decidedly better. The only drawback to his happiness was the continued harshness of his father, who continued as unrelenting as ever; but his sorrow for this was now chastened and subdued, and applying himself with all the fervor of his soul to the acquiring of the perfection of his state, he left his troubles about his father confidently and lovingly in the hands of God, knowing that He would bring everything about as should seem best to His infinite wisdom.

Whilst Edwin's days are thus gliding away in peace and tranquil happiness at his college, what of the proud man who has spurned him from his heart? A little more bent, his hair a little grayer, and his form a little thinner, but prouder, sterner, and more unforgiving than ever,—nursing his evil feelings as he broods over his imaginary wrongs, till at times the unfeeling devil, who is his master, is rampant in his proud heart, goading him on almost to madness, as he whispers his evil suggestions to him, torturing his proud soul with his black insinuations, bringing before him, as he sits in the gloom of his dark room, the picture of a fair young boy hanging about his neck, and whispering a thousand innocent endearments in his ear. Changing, then, the scene, as a gray-haired old priest comes in and leads the boy away, a thousand mocking faces seem to rise before him laughing him to scorn, till he can bear it no longer, but rising madly from his chair, is fain to pace his room with gnashing teeth, if thus, perchance, he may still the raging passions that are almost strong enough to kill him.

For three days after Edwin left him no one saw him, as he remained locked up in his own room, and even Johnson, who took up what simple refreshments he required, always found him in his inner room, whence he did not emerge until the servant had retired. How he spent those days he and his God alone know; but that they were days of fierce and awful conflict with himself his face bore testimony, as on the morning of the fourth he came forth, with a step more stately and prouder than ever, and entered the carriage which was waiting to convey him to his place of business. He met with an unflinching eye the pitying looks of such of his friends as he encountered, for the story had gone abroad; but though his face was perfectly unreadable in its pride and sternness, each look went like a dagger to his heart. For the first three months after their parting there was a hope lingering in the bottom of his heart that his boy would still return to him, and his heart would palpitate violently at each knock at the hall-door, or at the sound of any strange feet in the passage outside his room; but when he found that he did not come, and, most of all, when he learnt that he had gone to college to study for the priesthood, his fury knew no bounds, and he gave full vent to his evil passions. "To think," he would mutter to himself—"to think he could leave me so easily—me, who have loved him as scarcely father ever loved son; leave me for a wily old priest and an idolatrous creed; leave me to the scorn and contempt of a jibing world. My curse upon him for a vile apostate as he is! I will never forgive him, by the God that made me; never!"

And thus he fed the sense of the wrong he fancied he had sustained—never thinking for a moment that it was himself who stood most in need of pardon and forgiveness—never for a moment thinking of his boy with feelings of forgiveness and reconciliation, except in union with that submission to his will and that rejection of his adopted religion which he knew in his heart that Edwin would never make.

There was in his study, hanging over the fireplace, a large full-length portrait of Edwin taken when he was about fifteen years of age. He would sit for hours, almost unconsciously gazing upon it, and plunged into the deepest and most bitter thought. About a month after Edwin had gone to college, and when his bitter feelings were keenest, he had come home from the city one day more irritated and passionate than usual. Walking straight to his room, he locked himself in, and throwing himself upon a chair, his eyes rested as usual upon the picture. He sat thus for nearly an hour, and whether it were that his good angel was at work trying to soften the proud heart, or whether the remembrance of bygone days was fitting round him with a chastening influence, we know not; but the tears began to flow quickly down his pale cheek as he sat with his head resting upon his hand. Suddenly coming to himself, he started to his feet, and stood for a moment with clenched hands and contracted brow; then pulling the bell violently, as the old butler hurriedly entered the room, he said, pointing with his hand to the picture, but with averted face—"Johnson, take that—that—thing—away; and mind that I never see it again. No," he muttered, pacing backwards and forwards with hasty steps, "I will never forgive him—never—never—never." And then he sat down again, looking for awhile upon the blank space where the picture had been, till he turned away and hid his head upon his desk, and wept for his poor empty heart—wept in the stillness and darkness of the night, even for his lost, lost boy.

He received several letters from Edwin, who wrote to him in a most affectionate manner, begging his pardon if he had shown any want of due respect and deference towards him, candidly telling him, that were the step to be taken again a thousand times, he would feel equally bound to take it—and when he came to this part, Mr. Stanhope cast the letters passionately away from him—but that, in the manner of taking it, there was, perhaps, something to beg pardon for, asking him to remember the days gone by and all their former love, telling him how happy he was, and that the only thing needed to render his happiness complete was his father's forgiveness, assuring him that, whatever might happen, or wherever he might be, he could never forget his duty and love toward his dear father and his sister.

These letters were never answered, but were always returned to Edwin with a formal note from one of the clerks, intimating that he wrote, by Mr. Stanhope's orders, to Mr. Edwin Stanhope, to inform him that Mr. Stanhope had no desire to enter into any correspondence with him, and begged not to be troubled with any more letters.

And so he went his way, nursing his pride, even whilst it steeled his heart against his own son. He was kind, as usual, to his daughter, but would never allow her to introduce the mention of her brother's name. He had quarrelled with Mr. Seymour, who had spoken to him very freely on the subject of his son. Whilst the warm-hearted old man was in the middle of an eloquent, because warm and honest, expostulation with him, Mr. Stanhope interrupted him, coldly saying:—"When I require your advice on the management of my domestic affairs, sir, I will ask you for it. Till then I will trouble you, sir, to keep it to yourself." And, turning on his heel, he stalked proudly and haughtily away. He transacted his business as usual; he frequented the church as usual; he was in the world almost as much as usual, and casual observers remarked but little change in him, and wondered to see him bear his troubles so well. But, in the midst of his business, at church, or in the world, there were moments when, although a shadow that was dark and very gloomy flitted over his countenance, still the face grew less stern and haughty, and his pride seemed

to be giving way,—moments when he looked so worn and weary, that in very truth it rent the heart to see him,—many, many moments when that old look came over him, telling in an instant its tale of grief and pain,—telling, although he flattered himself that he had conquered, of the bitter, crushing price of the victory he had gained.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE SHADOWS THICKEN.—OLD JOHNSON CAN'T HELP IT, AND DOESN'T WANT TO HELP IT.

One morning, towards the middle of September, Father Eustace, who had become very uneasy at not having heard from Edwin for several weeks past, received a letter from the Superior of the College, informing him that his young friend was very unwell, and begging him to run down as soon as possible to see him.

Father Eustace turned very pale as he read, and when he had finished the letter, he put it aside with a very sad and troubled air, and covering his face with his hands, remained some time buried in sorrowful and foreboding thought. He had long felt that it would be so, and somehow he was not at all astonished at receiving this news; but for a moment he was crushed. He gathered from the letter that Edwin had about a month before caught a very severe cold; that it had baffled all the skill of the physician, and seemed to have settled upon the lungs of its victim, who was in a very weak and debilitated state. Edwin's courage at the time of his conversion, and his gentle and affectionate demeanor during their subsequent intercourse, had so endeared him to the good old priest, that he felt this illness of his dear young friend more keenly than even he himself liked to admit. He was resigned to the will of God, but he felt that it would be a very heavy blow to him, should the Good Shepherd take the innocent boy for ever to Himself. He felt that there would be one tie more, and that, perhaps, the strongest, loosed between himself and the world; and although he felt, and felt most surely, that his own loss would be the eternal gain of his young friend, still it would be a loss to *him*, and nature shrunk and trembled as she contemplated it.

He sat down to his desk with a moist eye and an aching heart, and wrote a few lines to Maria, breaking the sad news to her, but speaking of it as lightly as possible, and describing it as probably a mere passing illness from which he might soon recover. Father Eustace had a sad presentiment that it would not be so, and he feared that he was hoping against hope. He started at once for the college, and as soon as he saw Edwin his worst fears were realized. Edwin was up and dressed, reclining upon a couch, and as Father Eustace hurriedly entered, he stretched out both his hands, with the same gentle, innocent smile upon his face that Father Eustace had so often seen before, and putting his arms around the old man's neck, kissed him upon both cheeks, and then laid his head upon that breast which had once before pillowed it so gently and so lovingly, and burst into tears. Father Eustace looked for a moment upon the eye, at once so sunken and so bright. He saw the flush upon the drawn and hollow cheek. He saw the blue veins in all their painful distinctness upon the broad and white brow, and in the poor shrunken hands. He listened with all the quickened perceptions of love to the slow, heavy breathing, and he saw at a glance that his child was the victim of that dread and treacherous disease, which, seizing as it ever does, upon the fairest, purest children of the earth, snatches them away from us, even then when it has so refined and purified their grosser part that we can least afford to lose them;—snatches them away from us after it has made them most angel-like and heavenly, and whilst we would gladly lay down our own lives to keep them with us, laughs at our impotent efforts to cheat it of its prey;—snatches them from us when the eye is brightest and the cheek most rosy—leaving us, when all is over, but a poor, wasted, shrunken form, as fair, but as fleeting and as

fragile, as the pure white flowers which affection's hand is wont to strew around it.

At one glance Father Eustace took in all that was and all that was to be. He knew *it*; he had watched its progress often before, and he felt that though care and loving watchfulness might keep him to them for a time, it would be only for a time, and that ere long poor Edwin would most surely sleep the sleep that knows no waking. He tried hard to restrain himself for the sake of the sick boy, but as he held him in his arms, and all these thoughts rushed in an instant through his brain, it was too much, and he could only clasp him closer and closer to his breast, and try to whisper something about his soon being better.

"No, dear Father Eustace," answered Edwin, who had caught the words, "I shall never be better. I have long felt this coming on, and I know very well that I shall soon die. But, O Father Eustace, my own best friend, why do you weep so bitterly? I am happy, very, very happy. If I had died a year ago, it might have been different; but now; oh! now; oh! why do you weep? Am I not going to my God, and was it not yourself, my own dear father, who first told me of His goodness and His love? and now you weep to trust me to Him. Dear Father Eustace," he added, fondly looking into the face of the poor old priest, who was sobbing like a child; "dear Father Eustace, I love you very much, but not half as much as you deserve for all your kindness to me. I shall be very sorry to leave you, but I can leave you all for God. I am very, very happy; but," he added, drawing the old priest quite close to him, and whispering in his ear, "take me home, dear Father Eustace, take me home, if you please, for I should like to see my sister once again;" and lowering his voice still more, "I should like to die near *him*. Oh! don't cry so much; I cannot bear to see you. There, lay me down, for I am very weary. God bless you, dear Father Eustace, God bless you;" and with a pleasant smile upon his face, he fell asleep in the arms of the weeping old man; and as he slept so peacefully and calmly, he surely dreamt of angels and "the better land," if the gentle happiness that smiled upon his fair young face were a faithful index of his visions.

As he had a fancy to return to London, they thought it best to humor him, especially as the physician was of opinion that his native air would be of service to him. They tried to get him away as quietly as possible, but it had gone abroad, and his fellow-students, to whom his gentle manners and ardent piety, together with his sad history, had greatly endeared him, crowded around the carriage as it was about to drive away. He shook hands with all of them, but could not speak. As they drove away, he took a long lingering look at the happy home where he had spent so many pleasant months, and where his example had drawn many a thoughtless heart nearer to its God. "I can bear the rest now," he whispered, as he sank back in the carriage; "I can bear the rest, for the hardest trial is over."

They travelled by easy stages, and he bore the journey pretty well. As they drew near London, although Father Eustace was most urgent with him to go home with him, he, in his thoughtful consideration, persisted in refusing to do so. "No," he answered very quietly, but firmly, "perhaps papa may soften towards me now, when he hears how ill I am; and you know dear Father Eustace, that he would, perhaps, feel awkward in coming to see me at your house. I will go back to poor old Mrs. Martin, who will nurse me very tenderly. Besides I am quite rich, for I have a great part of the £100 left which papa so thoughtfully sent me after we parted. It will be better for us all," and as he seemed anxious about it, Father Eustace consented to the arrangement, more especially as they would be close together. He had only been a few hours in his own lodgings, when Maria, who had been apprized of his arrival by Father Eustace, came, attended by old Johnson, to see him. Once before, during the course of this simple tale, we had to beg our readers to allow us to draw a veil over a certain scene, and we must beg the same indulgence now. Others, perhaps, might be able to do it, but, for our part, we

must confess that our mind can neither conceive, nor our pen describe, the holy and sacred scene when the brother and sister looked into each other's eyes once again, and when without uttering a single word, heart spoke to heart, with an eloquence in its language which our feeble pen shrinks from endeavoring to portray.

Meanwhile, poor old Johnson, who had left the sick chamber after the first sad greeting, was sitting, with his eyes very red, in Mrs. Martin's little back room. They had both been crying, and they commenced afresh, as old Johnson said—"You see, Mrs. Martin, I hope I know my place, and it doesn't become me to speak too freely about my betters. Mr. Stanhope has been a very good master to me, and of course he knows what is best; and when I see him so pale and sad, and with such a worn, weary look about him, I feel very sorry for him; but then, when I see poor Master Edwin, and think that in a short time he will surely be an angel in heaven, and when I think of him, as I have known him all these eighteen years. I can't help it, but I must give way. God help me, I can't help it; and," he added more emphatically than ever, "I don't want to help it!"

"God help *him*," answered Mrs. Martin, rather sharply, "who has caused all this, and soften his proud hard heart."

"Mrs. Martin," responded Johnson, "I hope I know my place, ma'am. It doesn't become me; but," breaking out again, "I can't help it; God help me, I can't help it."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE END APPROACHES.—THE FATHER'S VICTORY COMPLETE AT LAST.

For the first two or three weeks after his return to London, the sick boy was able to go out for an hour or two in a carriage during the heat of the day, but he soon became too weak even for this. He sank very rapidly, and towards the end of October was unable to leave his bed. The faithful hearts that watched around him, began to see but too plainly that hope was gone, and that he must very soon close his eyes upon the world. He had wasted away under the influence of his disease until it was most painful to look upon his poor shrunken form and be obliged to think that his brave young heart must so soon succumb to the insidious foe that had seized upon him, and that no power of man, no force of love, no ardor of devotion could save him. But upon his face, even when his sufferings were the greatest and his pain the most intense, there ever rested the same gentle smile, sadder, perhaps, and more chastened in expression, but loving, patient, sweet as ever. There was the same quick appreciation of every little service rendered to him, and, when he was too weak to speak his thanks, there was something so grateful, so loving, and, above all, so heavenly in the look of his large, dark eye, rendered doubly brilliant by his disease, which went at once with so much force to the hearts of those around him, that there was not one of them who would not willingly have died to save the gentle, patient boy, who never uttered a hasty word in all his pain. From the first moment of his conversion, he had labored most earnestly, and with unflagging diligence, to correct the natural defects which he found within his own heart, and now, when his disease had so purified, and, as it were, so spiritualized his mere animal part by its wasting influence, he was so angel-like, so immaterial, that they moved about his bed with something very near akin to awe, as if they felt that he had already put on some part of that immortality which was so soon to enshroud him in its eternal brightness. He was too weak to speak much, but whenever he saw his sister (who was with him every day) or Father Eustace turn away to hide the tears they could not restrain, he would beckon them to his side, and, as they stooped down to kiss him, would whisper to them,—"I am very, very happy; oh! pray don't weep for me."

One day he saw poor old Johnson sitting weeping at the foot

of his bed, and he beckoned the old man to come nearer to him. When the faithful old servant had seated himself upon the side of the bed, Edwin put out his poor wasted arms, and taking him round the neck, laid his head upon the old man's breast, as he had so often done in his childish days. "Poor old Johnson," he feebly whispered, "you have been very good to me, and I love you very much. I recollect the night you took me up to see my dead mother; I hope to see her soon in heaven now. Johnson, dear Johnson," he continued, very earnestly, "be very careful of poor papa. When I am dead, ask him to come and kiss me before they lay me in the ground, and tell him that I always loved him very much. Poor, poor papa; I know you will be very sorry when I am gone."

Poor old Johnson tried to speak, but in vain. Though his hands were but rough, he laid the sick boy down as tenderly as an angel might have done, and, withdrawing into the next room, sat for a long, long time behind the door, with his face between his hands, refusing to be comforted.

Maria came every morning after Mr. Stanhope had left for the city, and, remaining all the day with Edwin, returned home in time to meet her father at the usual dinner hour. The sick boy used to follow her with his eyes as she moved softly about the room, performing a thousand little offices of love, and a happy smile always passed across his pale face as she came over to the bed, and, smoothing his pillow, sat down by his side. When his pains were greatest he always turned his face to her, and laid his head upon her bosom till they had passed away. When she was about to leave him for the night, and bent over him to kiss him ere she went, for the last few nights of his life, he always drew her quite close to him, and, in addition to his usual "Good bye, dear, good bye," softly added, "Poor, poor papa; give my love to poor papa." When she had left, her place was usually taken for the night by Father Eustace; so that, night or day, there was always a gentle hand for his to rest in, and a loving eye to meet his gaze as it looked its never-varying tale of grateful thankfulness.

Mr. Stanhope had never asked a question, but he knew very well that his son had returned to London and was ill. How ill he knew not, and his pride would not allow him to inquire. He knew, too, that Maria was in constant communication with her brother, and he did not attempt to forbid it. He was, in fact, more tender than ever towards her, as if he were anxious—as in his innermost heart no doubt he was—to show his gratitude for her love towards his lost boy. He would fain have gone himself to the bed-side of his child, but pride was his master even yet. Had he not sworn never to look upon his face again, and should he—he who had been so cruelly wronged—be the first to submit? What would men say? What would the world think? It could not be. Maria often essayed to speak to him of Edwin, and he listened, oh! how eagerly, to hear whether he retracted and sent the expected message of submission; but, as soon as he had heard that his boy was steadfast yet, he would hear no more, but hurry away to his own room, whence he would come forth no more that night.

During the day, on the evening of which this story opened, Edwin had appeared so much better, and had spoken so cheerfully and hopefully, that Father Eustace, who was quite worn out, left him in charge of Mrs. Martin, and, promising to return very early in the morning, had gone home.

It was but the last expiring flicker of the lamp ere it went out; and Mrs. Martin, observing, about an hour after Father Eustace had left, a very serious and unmistakable change in Edwin, had, at his request, hurriedly sent for the old priest. Upon his arrival, Father Eustace saw at a glance that the time was come, and that the fatal change was near at hand. The flush had departed, and the bright eye was closed; the perspiration stood in cold drops upon his brow, and his breathing sounded with a painful distinctness through the still, quiet room. He was almost unable to speak, but was perfectly sensible, and as Father Eustace took his hand and whispered in his ear, "My dear child, would you like to receive once more your Lord and your God—the Good Shepherd who is about to take you to Himself for evermore, and to carry you away to never-

ending bliss?" he pressed the hand that held his own, and opened his eyes with an anxious, longing look. The last whispered confession was over; the innocent young soul once more absolved, and left in solemn communion with the God who had come to be Himself the pledge for all that waited for his coming in the land above.

After some minutes he opened his eyes again, and with some difficulty managed to whisper, "My sister; my poor, dear papa."

Father Eustace interpreted his wish, and hastily leaving the room, called a cab, and bade the driver hurry with all possible haste to the house of Mr. Stanhope. The distance was very short, and they soon arrived. Bidding the driver wait, and giving Johnson, who opened the door, a hurried account of the state of Edwin, Father Eustace followed him to the drawing-room, and entered almost simultaneously with him.

Mr. Stanhope and his daughter were sitting together, and both turned pale and started to their feet as he entered. Mr. Stanhope frowned haughtily upon him, and seemed inclined to leave the room. Father Eustace heeded him not. "I come, sir," said the old man, with the tears trickling down his face, "from the deathbed of your son, and *that*, I trust, will be a sufficient apology for my intrusion upon your privacy. As pure and noble a heart as ever breathed upon earth is even now growing cold, and the last word your boy uttered was your name. Surely you will now forget all that is past, and not allow the last wish of your own child to remain ungratified? Surely you will come and see him ere he die; and if you would do so, you must indeed use every haste."

Mr. Stanhope's lips quivered, and his face grew ghastly pale. He tried to appear firm, but he failed, for he trembled with the excess of his feelings. He tried to be haughty and sarcastic as he answered Father Eustace; but he failed, too, in this most miserably.

"I am astonished," he gasped rather than spoke, "I am astonished at your assurance, sir. By your arts and wiles you have deluded and led my boy astray. You have robbed me of my child," he continued most bitterly; "you have made me a laughing-stock to the world—you have made my home desolate—and now you dare to come to me with this story, which I dare say is false. You—you, who have done all this, dare to appear before me with this plausible tale, that to-morrow you may proudly boast to your fellows how you brought us together—how you finally conquered me, and laid me at the feet of an apostate. You don't know me, sir," he continued fiercely, and trembling with passion; "you don't know me, sir, or you would not thus appear before me."

"Sir," answered Father Eustace, struggling hard to keep down his indignation, "I scorn your insinuations, and I pardon your harsh expressions. This is no time for bandying words. I call to witness the God who is to judge us both," he continued, solemnly, and raising his hand to heaven, "that your only son is dying, perhaps even now is dead. Will you come with me or not, for I cannot delay?"

"No," he muttered hoarsely, "no, he has gone his way, I will go mine."

Father Eustace turned away to leave the room, and Maria followed him. As they went out at the door Mr. Stanhope stood watching them, with a face like that of a man in fearful agony. His brow grew knotted, and the cold sweat rolled in large drops down his face. He bit his lip till the blood gushed out, and his clenched hands quivered and trembled like aspen leaves. He stood thus until he heard the hall-door close and the cab drive away, and then with a fearful groan he threw himself into a chair, and grasping its sides till all the blood rushed from his hands with the force of the pressure, sat wrestling with the evil passions that were killing him. He knew that his son was dying. He had seen it in the face of the priest, and in the face of his daughter. He felt it in his heart, and he yearned towards his child. He could have given half his fortune to anyone who would have taken him out by force and carried him to the bed-side of his son; but he could not move himself. The devil in his heart was too much his master

to resign his dominion so easily. He had held undivided sway too long to give way now, although his victim struggled fearfully beneath his clutch. He sat, deadly pale, listening to the ticking of the clock as it sounded so distinctly through the quiet room, listening to the winter wind as it moaned and howled around the house, seeming in every gust to tell of death and blasted hopes. One hour—two hours—and still she was absent. When would she return to tell him that his boy was better, and the danger over? No footstep yet—no carriage drawing near and stopping at the door; nothing—nothing but the moaning, sighing wind with its tale of death, and the hurried beating of his own withered heart.

Death! death! death! sighs the wind without, as he starts from his chair at last, and with his head uncovered, rushes madly from the house into the cold, wet street.

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CHAPTER XIX.

ANOTHER VICTORY, AND A REAL ONE.—PEACE.

THEY hurried back with all speed, and hastened to the room of the dying boy. As they softly entered he opened his eyes for a moment, and as he recognized Father Eustace, his sister, and old Johnson, his eyes lighted up for an instant with something of its old fire, and he greeted them with the loving smile which they were so soon to see no more. He looked anxiously past them as if expecting some one else, and for a moment a shadow flitted across his face as he saw they were alone. It passed away, however, in an instant, as he made an effort to raise his hand, which held a crucifix, to his lips. He was too weak, and the hand fell back listlessly upon the coverlet; but Father Eustace, interpreting his desire, raised it to his lips, and he kissed the crucifix with all his remaining energy. They knelt around his bed, for they felt that the solemn change was at hand. They watched the awful and mysterious shadow as it crept across his face, and they knew that the young heart would very soon be cold and still. Slower and slower still, each breath more labored, more heavy, and more painful than the one before. The storm outside is hushed, and the wind has died away to a solemn moan, as it seems to wait for the brave young heart that is passing to its God—wails for the hopes that are dead, for the stricken hearts that are ready to break with very grief. Earth to earth! Dust to dust! Ashes to ashes! Slower and slower still. God be with him now! Another feeble smile as he seems to recognize a well-known voice, which strives, but almost in vain, to utter the Church's parting prayer: "Go forth, O Christian soul; in the name of God the Father who created thee; in the name of God the Son who suffered for thee; in the name of God the Holy Ghost who sanctified thee; in the name of the angels and archangels, the cherubim and seraphim; in the name of the patriarchs and prophets, of the holy apostles and evangelists, of the holy martyrs, confessors and virgins; in the name of all the saints of God; let thy place be this day in peace, and thy abode in holy Sion." Another look full of faith and love, and peace ineffable, as he gazes for the last time on the crucifix which the old priest holds before his glazing eye; another effort to form with his pallid lips the saving names, and a pure and brave young heart has passed away to his eternal rest.

Earth to earth! Dust to dust! Ashes to ashes! But the SOUL; and, oh! let us thank God as we say it, the free, the immortal soul, into the loving hand that gave it, to be taken up and laid so gently on that mercy-breathing breast, to be carried home for ever to Himself.

Now, whilst a solemn voice is sounding through the room, striving with the sobs which choke its utterance, "Come to his assistance all you saints of God, meet him all you angels, receive his soul, and present it now before its Lord;" close with a gentle and a reverent hand the bright young eyes that have looked their last upon the world; fold his arms, meekly and

humbly, across his breast, and place in the cold still hands the crucifix which in life he loved so well; let the heavy curtains fall, and draw them closely around the sacred presence of the dead. Yet, pause a moment—that the pale and haggard man who is rushing in at the door, with such a fearful cry upon his lips, may gaze for an instant upon the work of his own hands ere he throws himself with frantic grief upon the lifeless form.

Leave them alone, the father and son. Leave them alone as the wind howls, and moans more sadly than ever; leave them alone through the darkness of the night, and as the shadows thicken round them, each time that he dares to raise his eyes and look upon the calm and placid face of the dead, let him think of that other fearful night when he swore by his Maker's name never to look upon that face again; and let his proud heart wither, and bend, and break, as he thinks how faithfully he has kept his oath.

And, for thee, poor boy, peace be with thee! Though our hearts were heavy as we laid thee in thy early grave, and though we often, even yet, are forced to drop the silent tear as we muse upon thy sad and painful tale, still as we compare thy little loss with thy unspeakable gain, we are forced to confess that, even were it in our power, we could never have the heart to bring thee back again into this cold and dreary world of ours. Oh! no, we would rather leave thee in the old churchyard where thou sleepest so calmly and so free from care. We will tend with a loving hand the flowers that bloom above thy grave; and when our own hearts grow weak and faint, we will steal in the softening twilight to the holy spot, that we may gain strength and courage from the hallowed memories that flit around us there, telling us as they do of a brave young heart that is blessed with bliss eternal, because it knew what it was to do all and dare all for its God. Peace, peace be with thee!

CHAPTER XX.

MORALIZES AT AN UNPARDONABLE LENGTH.

AND now, dear reader, we have nearly finished. When we commenced we warned you that we had no romantic story, or tale of "thrilling interest" to tell you, but that ours was merely the repetition of an old story—the cost of a conversion—and that our object was to bring under your notice one phase of that which, more or less modified, is passing around us every day. The Catholic Church in England has gone through a severe ordeal, and all the brightness of the hopeful Future is needed to make us forget the darkness of the Past. For many a long year the English Catholic was a stranger in his own home, and an exile even in the land of his birth. Yet he never ceased to love her. The love of country is woven round our hearts like the love of our mother, and is mixed up with the purest, holiest, and best feelings of our nature. Providence may place us in foreign lands, our lot may be cast amongst those who are strangers to us, and the sweet music of our native tongue may seldom gladden our ear, but the old feeling still remains, and our minds wander with fond regret to our native land. We may visit sunnier lands, and walk amid richer flowers than those which deck our own, but somehow we cannot love them half so well, and the grandest dwelling that we see in foreign climes possesses not for us half the charms which twine around "the old house at home." If we have never left the land of our birth, how sweet is the thought that we shall rest in the old churchyard which we love so well, where we have so often strayed in childhood, and where we saw them lay the parents of our love! If we are exiles from our home, how intense our desire of returning thither, how enduring the hope, how buoyant the confidence, how fond the love, made fonder still by absence.

It was with feelings somewhat akin to these that the English Catholic, in the by-gone days, ever looked upon his deeply-erring, but still deeply-loved land. Years of persecution and suffering could not drive them from his heart; nay; they but increased and made them stronger. He kissed the hand that

struck him, no matter how unjust the blow might be, for the hand that inflicted the punishment was the hand of his country, and although, perchance, tears were mingled with the kiss, it was, nevertheless, the kiss of love. Exile could not banish from his heart the image that his love had enshrined there, and in sorrow he prayed that happier days might dawn upon the land he loved so well, and that he might no longer be a stranger in his father's halls. He loved her much with the love of regret for the days gone by; he loved her, most of all, with the love of desire for the days to come. In the heart of the English Catholic the present and the future are inseparably wound up with the past, for, when our minds wander back through the long vista of 1800 years to the days of Peter, and when we place modern events side by side with the foundation of Catholicity, it seems indeed but yesterday, and England, through all her length and breadth, was bright and blazing with the light of the brave old faith. Her cathedrals and her minsters had their altars and the presence of their God; and her rich lands were richer still, and her teeming fields were still more fertile, when the seed that was cast into them had been blessed by the hands of her monks. It seems indeed but yesterday, and the abbeys that are now in ruins, or the habitations of the beasts of the field, were alive with holy men; and as the gentle evening sun would sink to rest, the notes of their vesper hymn would steal along the smiling valley, and whisper to the weary husbandman of heaven and of rest; and the brawny hand was none the less manly because, as those sweet sounds would fall upon his ear, it was raised to sign himself with the sign of faith. In those good old times, if old age found the poor old man unprovided for, or if poverty surprised him, there were asylums where he might find refuge and rest, and those asylums were not parish workhouses. If sickness had laid him low, he was not thrown upon the tender mercies of a parish doctor; but his languid eye would fall upon the soft and gentle nun sitting round his bed of pain like some sweet spirit from a better land. If perchance his course was run, he went his way right cheerfully. In those days there was a heaven for poor Englishmen as well as for rich ones, and they did not throw him into the grave like some dead dog, but they bore the cross before him, and the vested priest followed on behind, and the dirge was sung, and the Mass was said, and they laid him in the ground with a careful and reverent hand, and they planted the cross above the place of his rest; and though he was but a poor man, they remembered his soul for many a day as that of a brother who had gone before them. Oh! it seems, indeed, but yesterday, and England had saints for her kings, saints for her bishops, saints in every grade of her society; and the heart of the English Catholic warms within him as he thinks of the days gone by—as he remembers the glories of St. Edward the Confessor and St. Edmund the Martyr—as he murmurs the name of St. Thomas of Canterbury. St. Wilfred of York, and St. John of Beverley—as he thinks with pride of St. Anselm, St. Dunstan, St. Edmund Rich, the Venerable Bede, and the hosts of saints whom England has given to heaven. He thinks of the good old times when England was in truth “*merrie England*,” and he weeps for the days when she could support her poor without consigning them to a workhouse—without tearing in twain those whom God had made one. He weeps for the days when “*Westminster Abbey would fill without a coronation*,” for the days when countless thousands knelt to worship God in York Minster; for the days when every village had its church, every church its altar, and every altar was blessed by the presence of its God. He thinks of these things, and he cannot but weep that they should have passed away; for, alas! pass away they did. Tyranny and lust were seated on the throne of Edward the Confessor; and because their vices and Catholicity could not be reconciled, they strove their best to smother the faith of ages. They scattered the relics of St. Thomas of Canterbury to the winds of heaven, and placed apostates and renegades in his archiepiscopal chair. They did then what they would do now, if they dared: they drove the monk from the monastery, and

sent the pure and consecrated virgin of Christ forth into a world that she had solemnly foresworn. They threw down the altar, and put out the lamp of the sanctuary. They desecrated the temples that had been built for the worship of the one true God, and the mighty piles which had so often echoed the hymn of praise were left mere material fabrics—bodies without a soul. The grand old temples of our fathers were left, with nothing of a church about them but the name; and now-a-days, as the gaping sight-seer wanders into them, he inquires in astonishment for what end they were built. He sees not what their use can be. He sees St. Wilfred of York and St. John of Beverley looking down upon him from the grand old stained-glass windows of York Minster; and he knows very well that they were not of his “*persuasion*,” and that he or they are intruders. He cannot conceal from himself the fact that they were looking down from the very same spot hundreds of years before his religion was invented, and that, therefore, the presumption of right is in their favor, to say nothing of possession. For many a year the rack, the knife, and the gibbet were the lot of those who clung to the faith of their fathers in England. There were times when the very existence of Catholicity in England appeared to depend on some one individual, some sainted bishop, or some hunted, persecuted priest, and then all the efforts of her enemies would be concentrated upon his capture. With fiendish jibes and hardened hearts they would lead him to the scaffold, thinking to quench in his blood the last spark of the faith, but forgetting, in the blindness of their hearts, that the blood of the martyrs has ever been the fruitful seed of the Church, and as they spilt his blood, it fell, indeed, upon the feeble flickering flame of the faith, but it fell not to extinguish it. No; as the martyr's blood trickled drop by drop from the executioner's knife, it fed, with its heaven-born fuel, that flickering flame, and again it blazed forth; again, phoenix-like, it sprang into a new existence from its own ashes, and the faith of Peter and of Rome laughed its enemies to scorn. For three hundred long years, sufferings, penal laws, disabilities, and every persecution that heresy and religious rancor could devise, were heaped upon the English Catholics. But these things have now begun to pass away too. The cloud that has so long enveloped the mountain's top is breaking at last. Within the last thirty years a wonderful movement has taken place in the English Church—a movement calculated to fill every Catholic heart with feelings of gratitude for the past and joyous anticipations for the future. Many of the best, purest, and most learned of the Protestant establishment have left, and are daily leaving, the wreck upon which they were sailing, and are scrambling, as best they may, on board the bark of Peter, but too glad to escape with the loss of everything else. These conversions come before us as a great fact, and, perhaps, we think no more about them. Did each one come before us in its own individual bearings, we should, probably find a romance, that is, a romance of real life, attached to almost every one of them. The story of Edwin Stanhope, which we have told you in this little work, is the story in a higher or lower degree, according to different circumstances, of almost every conversion which happened in these countries. We would fain hope that few are to be found so harsh and unforgiving as Mr. Stanhope was; and you yourself, dear reader, perhaps, know many whose sufferings have been scarcely inferior to those of poor Edwin. If you do not, we could tell you many such a tale. We could tell you of young and delicate girls driven from their homes, and exposed to all the dangers of the world, for daring to do as poor Edwin did. We could take you into places where, perhaps, you are seldom wont to go, and engaged in low, ay, even in menial offices—in offices far below their merit or their educational capacities, we could point out to you men who have sacrificed station, prospects, and everything which the world could offer them, and are obliged to earn their very daily bread in drudgery and toil such as you little conceive. Yes, we could tell you many such tales, and in our own simple way we have endeavored to tell you one of them. Yet simple, unromantic, matter-of-fact though it be, we would fain persuade ourselves that our story

has not been tedious, or altogether uninteresting to you, for whose amusement and instruction it was written. We would fain persuade ourselves, that, although we might not draw the tears from your eyes—for our feeble pen claims no such power—yet that you turned away from the death-bed of poor Edwin with at least a little feeling of sorrow and compassion in your hearts, and with a deeper and more grateful appreciation of that greatest of all blessings—the blessing of the Faith—which has been given to so many of you gratuitously, and for which, perhaps, you have never been called upon to suffer. We are but too apt to undervalue advantages which we have obtained without suffering or difficulty; and if it be true in general matters, that we prize a thing in proportion as it has cost us dear, how much more does it hold when Faith is in question! It is the poor struggling convert who, in general, has the keenest appreciation of the glorious gift of Faith. Again, we assure you that the story of Edwin Stanhope is no made up tale. If you doubt our assertion, we will tell you how to prove it. If you happen to meet any of those—and, thank God, they are not rare to meet with now-a-days—who are converts to our holy Faith, try to get them to tell you their story, and if you do not meet with some tale, at least substantially the same as ours, we are content to let you rank on the side of old Brown, as one of the most implacable of our critics. But if you meet with such a one, greet him with a friendly voice and a hearty grasp, for he is a true brother, and he has *proved* it; and if his portion be scant, and his lot be hard, help him if you are able, and you will do a good work, and one which God will bless; for, the same God knows well how much such fervent hearts, such generous souls, are needed to make some atonement for the cold, dead manner, in which too many of us, good, comfortable souls, take, as a matter of course, the blessings we have received, and for which we, perhaps, sometimes think that we pay a dear enough price if we are but ordinarily faithful to our religious engagements. Bear patiently with his little peculiarities, if perchance, he have them, and remember only the cost at which he has proved his sincerity. If you deem him too zealous, and consider that he is sometimes scarcely prudent in the efforts which he makes to bring others to the Faith, take care lest you be scarcely zealous enough, and remember that an excess of zeal is better than a want of it. Yes, again we say, greet him with a friendly voice and a hearty grasp, and do your best to make him feel that, if he has had to turn his back on many an old friend, that he has found many a new one; and, thank your God, that his trial has never been yours, for it may be, that it would have been a grievous temptation if you had been obliged to purchase your Faith by the renunciation of everything which is nearest and dearest to the heart of man. And for you, dear brother, long a wanderer, perchance, but safe in the haven at last, we, at least, bid you a hearty welcome. Bear your trials with a steady and manly heart. The priceless jewel of the dear old Faith is worth purchasing at any price, and if you be but faithful to the end, your reward shall be exceedingly great.

CHAPTER XXI.

VALEDICTORY.—A PARTING WORD WITH THE CRITICS.—THE PROUD HEART BENDS AT LAST.—UNAVAILING REMORSE.—FRANK AND MARIA.—FATHER EUSTACE IS CHARGED WITH A MESSAGE TO THE OTHER WORLD.—WHO SHALL TELL A LITTLE PRATTLER “WHY POOR GRANDPAPA IS SO SAD, AND WEEPS SO MUCH?”

As we have no doubt that the Browns, the Simpers, and the rest of our critics, are greatly disgusted with our story, we cannot conclude without a few parting words to them.

Brown is full of compassion for poor Mr. Stanhope, and declares that he was very badly used both by his son and the wily old priest; and Brown thanks God that there is no danger of his son Tom's playing any such tricks upon *him*; and, although we cannot thank God for it, we are very much afraid

that there really is very little danger of it. Miss Simper declares that our story was not so very bad, but that it was so shocking to kill poor Edwin in so unromantic a manner, instead of keeping him alive, and after carrying him triumphantly through all his troubles, disposing of him in the legitimate and only way which is recognized by every writer who knows how to compose a story; and Miss Simper casts our poor little story away quite indignantly, as if we had done her some wrong, when she finds that it concludes with a death-bed, instead of with orange blossoms and white favors. We hope the old gentleman will not be very angry, but, in fact, we are content to be treated with the contempt and scorn which we know he will hurl at us; for candor and sincerity compel us to confess that we care very little for old Brown or his opinion. We confess we feel more sorry to offend Miss Simper, but hope she will forgive us; for, although we *might* have made our story to conclude in such a manner as to please her, still we should have been obliged to conclude it by distorting facts, and ours is substantially a true tale. We have, too, so much confidence in her good nature, as to be persuaded that she will not be offended, even if we remind her, that, after all, there is something grander and greater than orange blossoms or white favors; and that some, who are favored above the rest, are called to follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth, and to sing a song which none else can sing; and why they are so called, Miss Simper surely has often heard; and as she thinks of this, we believe her heart will soften, and that she will become reconciled to the unromantic ending of our little tale.

We ought, too, no doubt, to make a Catholic of Mr. Stanhope. Would to God we could; but twelve years have rolled away since the death of Edwin, and he is not a Catholic yet. He is a white-headed, feeble old man now; but although still stately, and even stiff in his manner, you would look in vain for the pride and unbending self-will of other days. He buried them at last, but it was only in the grave of his son.

On the morning after the death of his boy, when they timidly entered the room, almost fearing to be repulsed, they found him still kneeling by the lifeless form, and with one of the cold hands pressed tightly to his heart. He allowed them to lead him away as meekly as a little child, and sitting between Maria and Father Eustace, listened to the sad story of how his boy had sickened and died the death of the just. He did not speak, even when the tale was done, but rising with a look so utterly broken and miserable, that it rent their very hearts to see him, walked slowly back to the room where the corpse was laid, and throwing himself upon his knees, kissed again and again the lifeless form, repeating ever and anon, “My own bright boy—my own heart's darling! Where was there ever such a boy as mine?—and I have killed him—I have murdered him—I have destroyed him! O God, forgive me! Would that I had died for him—my poor, poor boy.” So long as the corpse was in the house he never left it; and, although he insisted upon the interment taking place in his own church, he made no objection when Father Eustace requested his permission to perform the private service which the Church orders to be celebrated over those of her children whom circumstances prevent from being interred in her own consecrated ground. As soon as possible after the funeral, he retired from the active management of the affairs of the establishment of which he was the head, and retired to a country residence some miles from London. He lives there still, a feeble old man, but bent much more by the secret sorrow which has written itself upon his face and in his form, than by weight of years.

On the first anniversary of the death of his boy, he and his daughter were sitting together, and when she rose from her seat, and coming over to where he sat, put her arms about his neck, and told him, with many tears and kisses, that she must follow the example of his boy, and be a Catholic, too, he said not a word, but kissing her very tenderly, put her gently away, and retired to his room, and cried through the livelong night. On the morning she made her first communion, and came to kiss him and tell him so, he took her in his arms, and placed round her neck a magnificent diamond cross, which he had pur-

chased for her. Four years later, when she became the proud and happy wife of Frank Seymour, who, after all, *was* caught by Father Eustace, he blessed them both most fervently, and by a powerful effort restrained his tears until she had driven away; but when she was gone he cried again for his lost boy, and for the void that can never be filled up in his withered heart.

The conversion of Frank Seymour took place about eighteen months after the death of Edwin. He was much with Edwin during his last sickness, and the patience and gentle piety of his friend had its due effect upon Frank. The midnight mass at which he had been present with Edwin had not produced the same effect upon him as upon his friend, still he had never entirely forgotten it, and the seed which was then sown began to produce its fruit when he was brought into direct intercourse with Catholicity in the person of Edwin and Father Eustace. Before he became too weak, Edwin spoke much with his friend on the blessing of religion. His own appreciation of the blessing he had received was so intense, and his heart was so full of the subject, that he found it hard to speak on any other with those whom he loved. When the end was evidently drawing nigh, Edwin became still more urgent with his sister and Frank to promise him that they would examine the claims of the Catholic Church. There was little need to make such a request to Maria. She had been so constantly with the sick boy and his director, and had, almost unconsciously, learnt so much of Catholic doctrine, and what is much more efficacious, seen so much of Catholic practice, that she was half a Catholic before poor Edwin's decease; and the lesson conveyed in his calm and happy death was almost the only thing required to complete the work. Father Eustace, however, with his usual prudence, would hear of no hasty steps. He insisted upon her examining calmly and dispassionately the claims of the Church to her allegiance; and although the conversion of her intellect was almost as rapid as that of her heart had been, still a severe fit of illness which came upon Mr. Stanhope after his son's death, and which lasted several months, with several other reasons, combined to delay her formal reception for some time. She chose the anniversary of Edwin's death, as we have seen, to make the announcement to her father; not that she had any fear of meeting with any opposition from him, but because she thought he would feel it less on such a day, when so many chastening thoughts would be working in his heart. The conversion of Frank Seymour was a little longer delayed. When he took leave of Edwin the day before he died, and when the sick boy was too weak to speak much, Frank found himself altogether unable to restrain his feelings, and throwing himself on his knees by the bed-side of his friend, he sobbed aloud. Edwin managed to whisper:—

"If you knew how happy I am you would not cry, Frank; and if you would only promise me to keep up your intercourse with Father Eustace, and sometimes speak to him about religion, my happiness would be complete. Oh! promise me this, my dear friend, and I shall be happy."

Frank contrived to sob out a promise, and he nobly redeemed it. He had many conversations with Father Eustace, and the result of them was a step which Frank declares he has never regretted, and which he attributes to the prayers of one whom he is sure is a saint in heaven. Soon after the death of Edwin, Frank entered the establishment of Mr. Stanhope, at the urgent request of that gentleman, who seemed to find his chief happiness in heaping his favors upon every one whom his son had specially loved. With such an influence at his back, it is scarcely necessary to add that Frank rose fast. When he and Maria were united, he was made a partner in the firm, and for the last half-dozen years he has been its responsible head and manager. Wealth is pouring in upon him and his, and the use to which they turn it makes us wish them more of it. In him the struggling priest, who may be striving to build a chapel or a school, finds a generous friend. His alms are always accompanied with the same request. "I beg of you," he invariably says, "to pray for the eternal repose of one very dear friend, and for the conversion of another. I have no doubt

that my friend is in heaven, still, I shall not, on that account, neglect my duty; and if your prayers have any influence in bringing the mind of one who is very dear to me to think of Catholic Truth, I shall indeed be most grateful."

He and Maria are naturally very anxious about Mr. Stanhope. If they speak to him on religion he listens patiently, but seemingly without sufficient interest to enter into the subject. During the lifetime of Father Eustace he was never so happy as when the priest was by his side, narrating to him all the little incidents connected with the sickness and death of his boy. It was a subject on which Father Eustace was almost as pleased to speak as Mr. Stanhope was to listen; and many and many a time, when Father Eustace had told him how fervently his boy had loved him, and how constantly he had thought of him, the tears would flow down his pale face, and he would seem almost happy. "Tell me again," he would sometimes say, "Tell me again that he forgave me;" and then, when Father Eustace would reassure him that the last words of his boy were words of love and duty, he would lay his head upon the old man's shoulder, and gently murmur, "Tell me now, dear Father Eustace, if you please, tell me once again, the closing scene;" and, when the story was told, he would rise without a word and walk away into his own room, where they never followed him at such times; for, now that the first remorse and grief were over, they knew that it was better for him to be alone. Several times he said, "I am quite reconciled now, Father Eustace. I am not sorry that my boy became a Catholic. If it had pleased God to have left him to me, I should have been very grateful; but I know that he was too good for me, and that God took him from me to punish my pride and break my self-will; but I am not sorry he became a Catholic. No, I am not sorry. You know, Father Eustace, that I cannot help feeling my loss," he would add, as the tears streamed out afresh; "and you will pardon me, but I am not sorry. My boy is with God, and I am satisfied, only my heart is very empty without him, my poor, poor boy." At such moments Father Eustace sometimes endeavored to lead him to speak of religion, and the happiness which Edwin had found in the one he had embraced, and how cheap he had held the price at which he had purchased it, but it was of no use. He would not enter into the subject, and Father Eustace saw that nothing would be gained by annoying him. He, therefore, deemed it better, and his plan was the one adopted by Frank and Maria after his death, to surround him as much as possible with the influence of Catholicity, and to leave the rest to God. What an inscrutable thing is the human heart! Young faces are now to be seen in the home of Frank and Maria; and as the old man often insists upon their reciting their prayers to him, and watches to see that they make the sign of the cross properly they begin to hope that his mind is gradually turning toward Catholicity, and that, at least before his death, they may have the happiness of seeing him a member of the Church. God grant that it may be so.

The union of Frank Seymour and Maria was one of the last acts of the ministry of our dear old friend, Father Eustace. He soon after caught, in the discharge of his duties, a horrible fever, which was raging fearfully amongst the poorer members of his congregation. He recovered from the immediate effects of the fever, but he never thoroughly rallied, and about five years after the death of poor Edwin, Father Eustace died, in the fullest sense of the word, the death of the just, leaving behind him a name to be held in benediction, and a memory very dear to many, besides him who pens these lines. There was a gentle hand to smooth his dying pillow—a hand that was guided by the magic influence of a grateful heart, and of a memory that could never forget all that the old priest had been to one who had been dearer to her than all the world beside.

During his last sickness he was frequently visited by Mr. Stanhope. Several of their interviews were of a very painful nature, and it required all the skill of Father Eustace to soothe and pacify the repentant father. "I am truly grateful to you, dear Father Eustace," said he, "for all your goodness to my

boy." When I in my pride cast him forth upon the world, he might have died in the streets had he not found in you a second and a kinder father than the one who disowned him. I can never thank you as I ought. I will not even endeavor to do so, but I beg your pardon from the bottom of my heart for all the harsh treatment both to him and you; and when you meet my boy in heaven, tell him of the heartbroken old man who is left in his desolation upon the earth, and who, were it to be done again, would rather cut out his tongue than utter the awful curse which has cast a blight upon his life. Tell him, dear Father Eustace, how I grieve for all my cruelty to him. Tell him that his image is never for a moment absent from my heart, that my only consolation is the hope of meeting him again, if the goodness of God may pardon me my grievous sin." The desired pardon Father Eustace heartily accorded. He did his best to soothe the poor old man, and lead him to think of brighter things, but in vain. Since the death of Father Eustace he seldom speaks of his son, even to Maria, but there is that in his heart which can never pass away. There is a sorrow graven on it which time and loving care may perhaps soften, but which can never be effaced. There is in it a remorse which is all the more bitter because the cause of it can never be remedied. Oh, how often do we learn such lessons when too late! A little submission, a little forbearance in the beginning, and how much grief, how much bitter remorse, might often be prevented! But we cannot make the lesser sacrifice. The proud will may not bend until the evil is done, and then the remorse of a whole after life cannot repair the mischief, cannot recall the loving heart which has been cast away and sacrificed at the shrine of some unholy passion, cannot call back the smile which has fled, or light up the eye which has

become dim, though we would willingly lay down our own life to be able to accomplish it. How true are the words of the poet—

"They parted—ne'er to meet again!
But never either found another
To free the hollow heart from pining;
They stood aloof, the scars remaining,
Like cliffs which had been rent asunder:
A dreary sea now flows between,
But neither heat, nor frost, nor thunder,
Shall wholly do away, I ween,
The marks of that which once hath been."
COLERIDGE.

* * * * *

Young voices are prattling round the old man's knees, while a venerable white-headed servant is ever at his elbow, anticipating his slightest want, and ever most careful of him, and most solicitous to amuse him, as a certain mournful anniversary comes round. One little prattler, the oldest and boldest of them all, often climbs his knees, and sometimes says to him, "Dear grandpapa, do tell me why you cry so much when I speak to you about poor uncle Edwin. Johnson says he is a bright angel in heaven, now, and I know that old Johnson would not say so if it were not true; and if dear uncle Edwin be an angel, I cannot tell, grandpapa, why you cry so much, and are so sorry for him. I should like to be an angel too, if mamma would not be very sorry to lose me;" and as Johnson comes quickly forward, and leads the little fellow softly away, the wondering look grows deeper on the fair young face, as he whispers to the faithful old man—"Poor grandpapa, poor grandpapa—oh! do tell me, Johnson, why poor grandpapa is so sad, and weeps so much."

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Alas! who shall tell the innocent child the tale? Who shall answer him his question?

The Wounded Grenadier of the 49th;

OR

THE FIRST STONE OF A CHURCH.

THE town of Briangon is the dullest garrison in France, so that the regiments dread it like another Siberia;—above all, in winter, when the north winds blow furiously amongst the large trees of the neighboring forest; when the rough pavement of the streets is hidden under a thick bed of snow, and cold, 20° below freezing point, besieges the sentinel in his box. Thus it was always with extreme delight our brave soldiers saw, piercing through the foggy atmosphere, the first rays of the spring sun, which announced to them, with the arrival of fine weather, a reprieve from their arduous duty. The sun's rays to them was what the breeze is to the mariner, whose impatient sails have remained so long inactive amid the ocean calms. It was on a fine day in the year 1845, that, after a long winter, the 49th Regiment of the Line advanced, with drum and flag, to the esplanade of Chauvet, the accustomed theatre for military evolutions. Like the sky, the countenances of the soldiers were unclouded; they were going to use their arms once more, and have a mock fight. The colonel, in fact, had chosen this fine day to exercise the artillery. The Grenadiers and Voltigeurs rivalled each other in skill and precision.

Not far from the spot, walking slowly along, was a man clothed in black. His eyes were fixed on the book he held, and his serious countenance reflected the pious thoughts of his soul: he was a man of peace, and holy life, whom God had chosen as His earthly representative—the modest curé of the village of Chauvet, who was reciting, in a low voice, the psalms from his breviary. Indifferent to the noisy tumult which surrounded him, he seemed absorbed in his devotions, when suddenly loud cries were heard;—a gun had unfortunately burst, and a grenadier was grievously wounded. The

curé was soon at his side. This good man was not only the physician of souls, but inspired by charity, he had consecrated the leisure hours of his priesthood to the study of medicine, and was able to apply the secrets of the learned science to the ordinary ailments of the country people. He now acted for the surgeon-major, who was detained at Briangon from indisposition. The grenadier, transported to the curé's humble dwelling, was laid on the priest's own bed, and received every care and attention from the good man. As the wound was too severe to allow of his being removed to the town, even on a litter, the curé asked and obtained leave from the colonel to keep the sick man, and nurse him at the presbytery.

"I will soon return him to you quite cured," said he; "that is, if Providence, in its mysterious designs, has not resolved to call him hence. At all events, I will prepare his soul for a better world."

An instant after, the drum beat, and the regiment returned to Briangon. The illness of the grenadier was long; for more than a month the good curé tended him with that skill and devotion science, sanctified by religion, alone can give; for more than a month he never left him but to attend to the exercises of his holy office. It was a touching sight to see this poor priest, rich only in charity, bending by day over the sick man's couch, and at night extended at his feet on a simple mattress: his only covering a cassock—a noble uniform, worn out in the functions of his ministry.

His cares were at last crowned with success: at the end of five weeks the grenadier could sit up, and some days after rejoined his corps. Thus, as he had said, the good curé accompanied him to Briangon, and returned him completely cured.

The following Sunday, the colonel of the 49th, and all the officers of the regiment, came to Chauvet to offer their thanks to the good priest.

They had scarcely arrived at his house when one of those violent storms, so common in mountainous districts, came on suddenly; vivid lightning accompanied by deep atmospheric sounds, burst from the clouds; rain, mixed with hail, penetrated the roof of the humble dwelling. The officers wished to seek shelter in the church, but the temple of the Lord was in no better condition than the house of His minister; enormous sheets of water inundated the aisles of the sanctuary. The colonel could not avoid expressing his surprise at such an unexpected sight. Was it the result of culpable indifference or of deplorable poverty? The curé satisfied him on this question by saying, that for a long time he had entreated the assistance of government, for the resources of the church were not sufficient to undertake the necessary repairs.

"But nothing seems easier to me," replied the colonel; "you have all the materials under your hand; wood in abundance; and stones sufficient to construct ten capitals as large as Paris."

"It is the workmanship we want," said the curé; "and we are not rich enough to procure it from abroad."

Just then a captain approached the colonel, and spoke a few words in a low tone, to which the latter replied by a mute pressure of the hand. How quickly noble hearts understand each other! In the meanwhile the storm had ceased; and the colonel, giving the signal for departure, took leave of the curé, who was delighted with a meeting which honored him as much as it did his grateful visitors.

The next morning, as the good curé of Chauvet was reciting his breviary before the door of his house, all on a sudden he saw in the distance, marching in good order, but without drums, a strong body of soldiers, armed with all sorts of instruments, and preceded by sappers opening the march with their hatchets on their shoulders,—some carrying pickaxes, some sacks, others trowels and hammers; all with merry faces and hearts, approaching the priest's dwelling, singing the popular air:—

De courage
A l'ouvrage,
Les amis sont toujours là!

"Good morning, monsieur le curé," said the eldest of the band, making a military salute, and presenting arms. He was an old non-commissioned officer,—his lip set off by a fine grey moustache; and he bore on his arm three honorable badges.

"Good morning my friends," answered the curé, closing his book of devotions; "what are you going to do, in these parts, with those workmen's tools?"

"We are coming to cancel a debt of gratitude, monsieur le curé; that is to say, to pay a bill of exchange which is owing from the 49th Regiment of the Line."

"What debt, my children?"

"That which we contracted towards you on the day you tended and cured our poor wounded comrade."

"I only did my duty."

"And we are doing ours in coming to build a church for the good God, and a house for His minister."

"Can it be true?" said the curé, uttering an exclamation of joy.

"Nothing more so; and to-day we begin the work!"

De courage,
A l'ouvrage,
Les amis sont toujours là!

On that very morning the soldiers of the 49th, transformed into masons, joiners, carpenters and stone-cutters, bravely commenced their task. The little esplanade of Chauvet was soon converted into a vast timber yard. The neighboring forest, and the rocks in the environs, furnished excellent materials. Every evening the soldiers of the 49th, happy and pleased, returned to Briangon, and came again on the morrow to continue their undertaking. Their zeal, stimulated by generous devotion, did wonders. A lieutenant, filling the office of ar-

chitect, directed the works with intelligence. "In a few days," said these brave men, "the good God and His minister will have a church and house free from the storms and inclemency of the weather."

This thought redoubled their strength; they advanced rapidly in what they called their work of gratitude. Two months had scarcely passed since the first stone, blessed by the curé, had been laid, when an enormous nosegay, formed of fir branches, crowned the church destined to the worship of God, and the white house for the curé. Some days later, the ornaments for the interior were completely finished. The satisfaction of the curé was then so great that his heart seemed too narrow to contain his joy. Great happiness sometimes produces the same effect as great grief. The good priest fell seriously ill one Saturday evening—the evening of the day when the 49th Regiment assisted, in full uniform, at the benediction of the church so rapidly constructed by their zealous charity.

A poetical non-commissioned officer—or rather, a non-commissioned officer who was a poet—taking advantage of the illness of the poor curé improvised a vaudeville, and appropriated the characters to his most intelligent comrades. Six days sufficed to learn and repeat their different parts. On the seventh, the town of Briangon was invited to assist at the first representation, the profits of which were to be consecrated to the decoration of the new church at Chauvet. For the first time, perhaps, God had become, according to the *naïve* expression of the drum-major, the receiver of the profits of a comedy. The whole village responded to this charitable appeal. The first representation was as brilliant as it was productive; in fact, the actors collected, amidst immense applause, an important sum, which was doubled on the morrow, and by the evening of the next day, amounted to 1800 francs. The officers, and the soldiers themselves, increased it by a general and voluntary subscription of 700 francs.

These 2500 francs were entrusted to two officers, who immediately set off for Lyons, to make the necessary purchases for the embellishment of the church. During this time the curé, admirably tended in his turn by the surgeon of the 49th, began rapidly to amend, and in a few days would be able to resume his duties. The soldiers—from masons, become decorators—took advantage of this delay to ornament the interior of the new church, and to arrange artistically the purchases made at Lyons. Stations of the cross divided the white walls into fourteen spaces; beautiful gilt chandeliers were arranged on each side of the altar, which was covered with a new cloth; a handsome tabernacle was placed between the candelabras; a rich remonstrance, supported by two angels, and also an elegant pyx shone in the mysterious shade of the tabernacle; a banner, in various colors, bearing the image of the Immaculate Virgin was hung opposite the pulpit; and a picture, eight feet high, representing the Patron of the Commune, was suspended over the high altar. Nothing had been forgotten—flowers, vases, candlesticks, a new missal censers, &c.: a beautiful woollen carpet on the altar steps, completed the general effect of this work of piety, and did honor to the taste of the valiant sacristans. A deep-toned bell at the top of the tower replaced the old cracked one, which had become hoarse, the troopers said, with so often sounding the Alleluia on fête days, and the De Profundis on the days of mourning.

At length the great day arrived. One Sunday morning the 49th Regiment ranged themselves in military order before the church; a detachment of honor lined the nave, and the choristers placed themselves before the desks. The delighted inhabitants knelt in different parts of the holy building; all was happiness and joy; the faces of the soldiers were radiant; you could see by their looks they had performed a good action. At ten 10 o'clock the good curé of Chauvet—pale, and still bearing the traces of recent illness—appeared at the altar; tears shone in his eyes, but they were tears of joy and gratitude. On seeing him, the military band commenced the Te Deum and all united in singing this hymn of triumph.

Some weeks after this imposing ceremony sad news reached Chauvet: the 49th Regiment of the Line was going to leave Briançon;—it was ordered to proceed to Africa, to join the French army in Algeria. The regiment was to depart in forty-eight hours.

There is not a moment to lose, thought the curé of Chauvet, inspired by a sudden impulse; and taking from a dusty drawer two silver dishes, which never saw daylight excepting on most important occasions, he set off for Lyons, where the regiment was to arrive on the fifth day. The good curé had not an instant to lose, if he wished to execute the project he had conceived. His first care on arriving at the ancient capital of Gaul, was to seek out a jeweler on the quay of the Saône. This person could scarcely forbear smiling at the sight of the venerable priest, covered with dust, carrying in his hand a thick nut stick, and wearing enormous iron-soled shoes.

"From whence come you, monsieur le curé?"

"From Chauvet, monsieur."

"I do not know that seaport; where is it situated?"

"In the mountains of the Alps, near to Briançon. But I am not come here to give a lesson in geography," said the curé, slowly unfolding the paper in which he had wrapped his treasure. "I have undertaken this journey to Lyons to sell these two covers—will you buy them?"

"You have taken along journey for so small a thing."

"The smallest often possesses a hidden value, monsieur. Now, answer—will you buy my dishes?"

"Their ostensible value is not great," replied the jeweller, weighing them in his hand, "for they have been, like your cassock, long in use."

"How much are they worth?"

"Thirty-three francs."

"That is very little," said the curé, as he searched in the pocket of his black velvet trowsers: "and this silver watch—how much will you give for this?"

"But very little, monsieur; for it has also seen long service. Ah! are all your household on the invalid list?"

"That does not signify. How much is this watch worth?"

"I begin to comprehend, monsieur le curé; you are working for the poor, just now, are you not?"

"No, monsieur," said the curé smiling; "those for whom I destine the profits of the sale are much richer than you and I. Once more—how much is the watch worth?"

"Twenty-five francs."

"Give me eighty-five and the watch and two covers are yours."

The jeweller immediately counted out the sum, and the priest, relating the history of the building of his church, informed him also of his intended project; he wished to offer his kind friends of the 49th a slight remembrance of his gratitude. The jeweller, who possessed a good heart, though his manner was *brusque*, resolved to associate himself in the priest's generous intention.

"You are a worthy minister of God," said he. "I will complete the sum you desire to realize, if this is not sufficient to carry out your project."

The same day that the vanguard of the regiment arrived at the city, the curé of Chauvet had departed in the morning to meet the brave men to whom he owed his church and his dwelling.

"How! you here?" cried Peyre, the commander, perceiving him on the plain of St. Fond; "by what happy circumstance are you come?"

"You will soon know, commander;—in the meantime, I have a favor to ask you."

"Two, let it be, sooner than one; I can refuse you nothing."

"You will attend at my mass to-morrow?"

"Willingly we will accept your invitation, monsieur le curé. What say you, *monsieurs*?" added the commander, turning towards the officers of his battalion.

"We will be there also, commander."

"Well, then, *messieurs*, to-morrow I will meet you at the Church of St. Irenæus."

"Be it so. And now, you must remain with us; you must be our chaplain, and you shall share half my lodging."

So saying, the commander dismounted from his horse, took the arm of the venerable priest, and walking at the head of the column, made his entrée into the good old town of Lyons. On the morrow, the battalion of the 49th, in full uniform, preceded by drums, marched towards the church. The curé of Chauvet was waiting for them at the door of St. Irenæus. "You see we have kept our word," said the commander, pressing the good man's hand.

"Thank you, commander. Now, before celebrating mass, and imploring for you and the whole regiment the benediction of the God of Armies, I have to ask you the second favor you promised me yesterday."

"It is granted, monsieur le curé. What is it?"

"Will you permit me to offer you a medal that the inhabitants of Chauvet have charged me to present to the regiment as a memento of their eternal gratitude? Here it is."

At these words he offered to the brave commander a large and elegant medal bearing this inscription on the side:

Religion, Honor, and Our Country,

and on the reverse:

From the Inhabitants of the Village of Chauvet
to the 49th Regiment of the Line.

A token of gratitude.

The good commander, Peyre, threw himself into the good priest's arms, saying, "Come, monsieur le curé come and bless this medal, so that it may be the most precious treasure of the regiment."

"And do not forget us in your prayers after we are gone," added one of the officers, a tear standing in his eye.

"Let us pray for each other," said the worthy curé; "and if it be the will of Providence that we see each other for the last time, may we meet in a better world."

The Sisters.

ONE evening I saw, by the advertisements, that the next day was a holiday at Sèvres, and that the china manufactory would be open to the public. I was tempted by the beauty of the morning, and suddenly decided to go there.

On my arrival at the station on the left bank, I noticed the crowd hurrying on in the fear of being late. Railroads, besides many other advantages, will have that of teaching the French punctuality. They will submit to the clock when they are convinced that it is their master; they will learn to wait, when they find they will not be waited for. Social virtues are, in a great degree, good habits. How many great qualities are grafted into nations by their geographical position—by

political necessity—and by institutions! Avarice was destroyed for a time among the Lacedæmonians by the creation of a copper coinage, too heavy and too bulky to be conveniently hoarded.

I found myself in a carriage with two middle-aged sisters belonging to the domestic and retired class of Parisians. A few civilities were sufficient to gain me their confidence, and in a few minutes I was nearly acquainted with their whole history.

They were two poor women, left orphans at fifteen, and had lived ever since as those who work for their livelihood must live—by economy and privation. For the last twenty or thirty

years they had worked in jewellery for the same house ; they had seen ten masters succeed one another, and make their fortunes in it, without any change in their own lot. They had always lived in the same room, at the end of one of the passages in the Rue St. Denis, where the air and the sun are scarcely known. They began their work before daylight; went on with it till after nightfall; and saw year succeed to year without their lives being marked by any other events than Sunday mass and vespers, a walk, or an illness.

The younger of these worthy workwomen was forty, and obeyed her sister, as she did when a child. The elder looked after her, took care of her, and scolded her with a mother's tenderness. At first it was amusing; afterwards one could not help seeing something affecting in these two gray-haired children—one unable to leave off the habit of obeying, the other that of protecting.

And it was not in that alone that my two companions seemed younger than their years;—they knew so little that their wonder never ceased. We had hardly arrived at Clamart before they involuntarily exclaimed, like the king in the children's game,—*they did not think the world was so great!* It was the first time they had trusted themselves on a railroad, and it was amusing to see their sudden shocks, their alarms, and their courageous determinations. Everything was a marvel to them! They had the remains of youth within them, which made them sensible to things which usually only strike us in childhood. Poor creatures! they had still the feelings of another age, though they had lost its charms.

But was not there something holy in this simplicity, which had been preserved to them by abstinence from all the joys of life? Ah! how wrong was he who first had the bad courage to attach ridicule to that name of old maid, which recalls so many images of grievous deception, of dreariness, and of abandonment! how wrong is he who can find a subject for sarcasm in involuntary misfortune, and who can crown gray hairs with thorns!

The two sisters were called Frances and Madeleine. This day's journey was a feat of courage without example in their lives. The fever of the times had infected them unawares. Yesterday, Madeleine had suddenly proposed the idea of the expedition, and Frances had accepted it immediately. "Perhaps it would have been better," she said, "if she had not yielded to the temptation offered by her younger sister;" but "we have our follies at all ages," as she philosophically remarked.

"We really must amuse ourselves," said Madeleine; "we do but live once."

And the elder sister smiled at this Epicurian maxim.

In truth, it would have been a great pity if any scruple had interfered with their happiness, it was so frank and genial! The sight of the trees, which seemed to fly on both sides of the road, causes them unceasing admiration. The meeting a train passing in the contrary direction with the noise and rapidity of a thunderbolt, makes them shut their eyes and utter a cry;—but it has already disappeared! They look round, take courage again, and express themselves full of astonishment at the marvel.

Madeleine declares that such a sight is worth the cost of the journey, and Frances would have agreed with her if she had not recollected, with some little alarm, the deficit which such an expense must make in their budget. The three francs spent upon this single expedition were the savings of a whole week of work. Thus the joy of the elder of the two sisters was mixed with regret: the prodigal child now and then turned back her eyes towards the back street of St. Denis.

But the motion and the succession of objects distract her. See the Bridge of the Val, surrounded by its lovely landscape: on the right, Paris with its splendid buildings, which rise through the fog, or sparkle in the sun; on the left, Meudon with its villas, its woods, its vines, and its royal castle! The two workwomen look from one window to the other with exclamations of delight. One fellow-passenger laughs at their childish wonder; but to myself it is very touching, for I see

in it the sign of a long and monotonous seclusion: they are prisoners of work, who have recovered liberty and fresh air for a few hours.

At last the train stops, and we get out. I showed the two sisters the path that leads to Sèvres, between the railway and the gardens, and they go on before, while I inquire about the time of returning.

I soon join them again at their next halt, where they have stopped at the little garden belonging to the gatekeeper. Both are already in deep conversation with him while he digs his garden borders, and marks out the places for flower-seeds. He informs them that it is the time for hoeing out weeds, for making grafts and layers, for sowing annuals, and for destroying the insects on the rose-trees. Madeleine has on the sill of her window two wooden boxes, in which, for want of air and sun, she has never been able to make anything grow but mustard and cress; but she persuades herself that, thanks to this information, all other plants may henceforth thrive in them. At last the gate-keeper, who is sowing a border with mignonette, gives her the rest of the seeds which he does not want, and the old maid goes off delighted, and begins to act over again the dream of the milkmaid and her can of milk, with these flowers of her imagination.

On reaching the grove of acacias, where the fair was going on, I lost sight of the two sisters. I went alone among the sights. There were lotteries going on, mountebank shows, places for eating and drinking, and for shooting with the cross-bow. I have always been struck by the spirit of these out-of-door festivities. In drawing-room entertainments people are cold, grave, often listless; and most of those who go there are brought together by habit or the obligations of society. In the country assemblies, on the contrary, you only find those who are attracted by the hope of enjoyment. There, it is a forced conscription—here, they are volunteers for gaiety. Then, how easily they are pleased! How far this crowd of people is yet from knowing, that to be pleased with nothing, and to look down on everything, is the height of fashion and good taste! Doubtless their amusements are often coarse; elegance and refinement are wanting in them; but at least they have heartiness. Oh, that the hearty enjoyment of these merry-makings could be retained in union with less vulgar feeling! Formerly, religion stamped its holy character on the celebration of country festivals, and purified the pleasures without depriving them of their joyousness.

The hour arrives at which the doors of the porcelain manufactory, and the museum of pottery, are open to the public. I meet Frances and Madeleine again in the first room. Frightened at finding themselves in the midst of such regal magnificence, they hardly dare walk: they speak in a low tone, as if they were in a church.

"We are in the king's house," said the eldest sister, forgetting that there is no longer a king in France.

I encourage them to go on: I walk first and they make up their minds to follow me.

What wonders are brought together in this collection! Here we see clay moulded into every shape, tinted with every color, and combined with ever sort of substance.

Earth and wood are the first substances worked upon by man, and seem more particularly meant for his use! They, like the domestic animals, are the essential accessories of his life; therefore there must be a more intimate connection between them and us. Stone and metals require long preparation: they resist our first efforts, and belong less to the individual than to communities. Earth and wood are, on the contrary, the principal instruments of the isolated being who must feed and shelter himself.

This, no doubt, makes me feel so much interest in the collection I am examining. These cups, so roughly modelled by the savage, admit me to a knowledge of some of his habits; these elegant, yet incorrectly formed vases of the Indian, tell me of a declining intelligence, in which still glimmers the twilight of what was once bright sunshine; these jars, loaded with arabesques, show the fancy of the Arab rudely and ignorantly com-

ied by the Spaniard. We find here the stamp of every race, every country, and every age.

My companions seemed to be little interested in these historical associations;—they looked at all with that credulous admiration which leaves no room for examination or discussion. Madeleine read the name under every piece of workmanship, and her sister answered with an exclamation of wonder.

In this way we reached a little court-yard, where they had thrown away the fragments of some broken china. Frances perceived a broken saucer, almost whole, of which she took possession, as a record of the visit she was making. Henceforth she would have a specimen of Sèvres china *which is only made for kings*. I would not undeceive her, by telling her that the products of the manufactory are sold all over the world, and that her saucer before it was cracked, was the same as those that are bought at the shops for sixpence! Why should I destroy the illusions of her simple existence? Are we to break down the hedge-flowers which perfume our paths? Things are oftenest nothing in themselves: the thoughts we attach to them alone give them value. To rectify innocent mistakes, in order to discover some useless reality, is to be like these learned men who will see nothing in a plant but the chemical elements of which it is composed.

On leaving the manufactory, the two sisters, who had taken possession of me with the freedom of artlessness, invited me to share the luncheon they had brought with them. I declined at first; but they insisted with so much good nature, that I feared to pain them, and with some awkwardness I gave way. We had only to look for a convenient spot. I led them up the hill, and we found a plot of grass enamelled with daisies, and shaded by two walnut trees.

Madeleine could not contain herself for joy. All her life she had dreamt of a dinner out on the grass! While helping her sister to take the provisions from the basket, she tells me of all the expeditions into the country that had been planned, and put off. Frances, on the other hand, was brought up at Montmorency, and, before, she became an orphan, she had often gone back to her nurse's house. That which had the attraction of novelty for her sister, had for her the charm of recollection. She told of the vintage harvests to which her parents had taken her; the rides on Mother Luret's donkey, that they could not make go to the right without pulling to the left; the cherry gathering; and the sails on the lake in the innkeeper's boat.

These recollections have all the charm and freshness of childhood. Frances recalls to herself less what she has seen than what she has felt. Whilst she is talking the cloth is laid, and we sit down under a tree. Before us winds the valley of Sèvres, its many-storied houses abutting upon the gardens and the slopes of the hill;—on the other side spreads out the park of St. Cloud, with its magnificent clumps of trees intersected by glades—above, stretch the heavens like an immense ocean,

in which the clouds are sailing! I look at this beautiful country and I listen to these good old maids—I admire, and I am interested; and time passes without my perceiving it.

At last the sun sets, and we have to think of returning. Whilst Madeleine and Frances clear away the dinner, I walk down to the manufactory to ask the hour. The merry-making is at its height; the blasts of the trombones resound from the band under the acacias. For a few moments I forgot myself with looking about; but I have promised the two sisters to take them back to the Bellevue Station. The train cannot wait, and I make haste to climb the path again which leads to the walnut-trees.

Just before I reached them I heard voices on the other side of the hedge; Madeleine and Frances were speaking to a poor girl whose clothes were burnt, her hands blackened, and her face tied up with blood-stained bandages. I saw that she was one of the girls employed at the gunpowder mills, which are built higher up on the common. An explosion had taken place a few days before; the girl's mother and elder sister were killed; she herself escaped by a miracle, and was now left without any means of support. She told all this with the resigned and unhopeful manner of one who has always been accustomed to suffer. The two sisters were much affected. I saw them consulting with one another in a low tone;—then Frances took thirty sous out of a little coarse silk purse—which was all they had left—and gave them to the poor girl. I hastened to that side of the hedge; but, before I reached it, I met the two old sisters, who called out to me that they would not return by the railway, but on foot. I then understood that the money they had meant for the journey had been given to the beggar. Good, like evil, is contagious;—I run to the poor wounded girl, give her the sum that was to pay for my own place, and return to Frances and Madeleine, and tell them I will walk with them.

I am just come back from taking them home; and have left them delighted with their day, the recollection of which will long make them happy.

This morning I was pitying those whose lives are obscure and joyless; now, I understand that God has provided a compensation with every trial. The smallest pleasure derives from rarity a relish otherwise unknown. Enjoyment is only what we feel to be such, and the luxurious man feels no longer. Satiety has lost him his appetite, while privation preserves to the other that first of earthly blessings—*the being easily made happy*. Oh! that I could persuade every one of this! that so the rich might not abuse their riches, and that the poor might have patience. If happiness is the rarest of blessings, it is because the proper reception of it is the rarest of virtues.

Madeleine and Frances! Worthy sisters! whose courage, resignation, and generous hearts are your only wealth, pray for the wretched who give themselves up to despair; for the unhappy who hate and envy; and for the unfeeling into whose enjoyments no pity enters.

THE STRAW-CUTTER'S DAUGHTER.

BY RAOUL DE NAVERY.

Translated from the French by Lady Georgiana Fullerton.

CHAPTER I.

THE FARM OF CADIOIRNE.

IT is a glorious August morning. The sun has risen red and glowing, and as he mounts higher and higher, the rich cornfields shine like a golden sea as the light breeze moves the billowy mass. The lark darts upwards from the furrow, straight as an arrow—the first of God's creatures to sing its Maker's praises; the hum of insect-life begins; and all the pleasant country sounds mingle in sweet confusion; the cattle-bell, the herdsman's song, the barking of dogs, the lowing of cattle, the shrill crow of the cock proclaiming that the business of the farm has begun.

"Hurry on, my lads," cried cheery Péré Patriarche, the rich farmer of Cadiorne, to his sons and laborers, "we must all set briskly to work. Must have a good lot of corn got in before night; and you know that those who work well are paid well."

Yves and Aubin, the farmer's sons, harnessed the wagon-horses; Robert, the head man, gave out the sharp sickles; and the reapers bound large checked handkerchiefs under their straw hats.

Marthe, the farmer's wife, stood at her door looking on at the bright busy scene, a quiet motherly woman, yet the main-spring of the household as well as its sunshine. She managed everything with the help of one lame servant, who had grown old in her service, and whom every one called Limping Louison.

Marthe was turning away as the last of the reapers disappeared, when her youngest son, Aubin, came jumping over the blackthorn hedge, and running up to her for one more kiss. She gave at least a dozen to the sunburnt face and curly black hair, and then asked whether he would not be missed in the field.

"I really had forgotten my very own little sickle, mother dear."

"Very well, darling, be off again, and work hard."

"And, mother, you will come to the field when the Angelus rings?"

She nodded a promise; and Aubin was off like a shot, starting the birds in the hedge with his leap and whistle.

Aubin was soon back with the rest by the side of his favorite black bullock, a noble creature, with dewlaps that nearly touched the ground, and large soft eyes that turned slowly on his young master as if to thank him for keeping off the flies with an oak branch, which he flapped about his head.

On reaching the field, Aubin and Yves, like the others, set to work at once, and the ripe corn fell quickly and silently as the reaping-hooks cut their way farther and farther into the field.

And now it is noon; there is no shadow cast by the trees; the chirp of the grasshoppers and cicadas comes short and sharp in the midday heat. A bell rings, every man stops work, and the master, uncovering his head, recites the Angelus with all his men, after which all seek the group of oaks and walnuts at the bottom of the field, for the welcome hour of rest and refreshment. For the hundredth time some laborer bids his comrades beware of falling asleep under one of the walnut-trees; for there, three feet underground, according to

Breton superstition, lurks a poisonous snake, "le sourd," they call him, whose very presence is fatal to the luckless sleeper. So they all lie down under the oaks, all but Yves, who is afraid of nothing, and takes a pride in setting tradition, custom, and unhappily, holier things than these, at defiance.

Jean Patriarche, the father of the two lads, whose acquaintance we have made, was a very good specimen of a Breton farmer. He had married young; and Marthe was his own choice as well as that of his parents. Both families were well off, and well thought of in the parish of Saint Aubin du Cormier; the young people had been taught by the old curé, who had known them from their birth; and both were good, simple, industrious, and sincerely attached. Marthe was quite an heiress in her way, with the three splendid cornfields which made her dowry; and Jean's famous speckled cattle grazed in pasture land where the grass grew breast-high. Two years after her marriage Marthe was the mother of two sons. Aubin had his father's black hair, open brow, and honest eyes, and his mother's calm, gentle nature. Sincerely religious, he had a great love for the poor, and, when quite a little fellow, delighted in cutting great hunches of bread for them, which he could scarcely carry. One day he met a little barefooted boy, and instantly taking off his sabots gave them to the child, while he bound the straw which lined them, on his own feet. On his return his mother asked what had become of the sabots; she kissed him tenderly when the story was told, and next market-day she bought him a smart pair of buff-leather shoes, while the impromptu slippers were carefully put away in her press. "So," thought Yves, "the way to get easy shoes is to lose one's sabots." And next he came in barefooted and his face covered with blood.

"Good heavens! what has happened?" said Marthe.

"Fighting with little Maclou, the goose-boy; the geese were making a horrid row, and I halloed to him to keep them quiet; and as he chose not to mind me, I sent one of my sabots at his head."

"For shame, Yves! A little fellow like that!"

"He's an impudent monkey, all the same; and next time I catch him I mean to wring the neck of that biggest goose of his; as soon as the chap began blubbering she flew at me, and I got as many pecks as I had given him thumps."

"O, Yves, my poor child, will you never mend your ways?"

"Why, where's the harm of licking Maclou?"

"Poor little fellow, he was doing you no harm; and he's such a good boy."

"Is he, indeed? Well, I can't abide the little beggar; and, besides, I wanted shoes like Aubin's, so I got rid of my sabots, for they are broken to bits."

"Aubin's was a very different affair."

"Not a bit of it; it all comes to the same thing; he gave his away, and I smashed mine; so, as I haven't another pair, you'll just have to buy the shoes."

"That I shall certainly not do."

"Oh, then," said Yves insolently, "there's one law for Aubin, and another for me, is there?"

"Yes, there is a different law for a cruel, disobedient boy, and for a good and charitable one. I reward the one and I punish the other. But, mind, you are not to suppose that I

love you less than him because you force me to treat you differently. Oh, Yves, you are my eldest child, the first who called me mother, and God knows how I thanked Him for you. Let me thank Him still more, Yves, as I shall do when you are a better boy; don't go on grieving your father and me. And why are you jealous of your brother? He would give up everything to you."

"His shoes, for instance?" said Yves with a rude laugh.

"You are a bad boy—cruel and bad."

"So you have said before; once more, will you buy me a pair of shoes?"

"No, I will not. When you deserve favors, you shall have them."

"Very well; I shall wring that bird's neck, and Maclou will get a flogging."

"You will never be so wicked."

"I will, as sure as—"

Marthe threw her arms around him: "Hush, Yves, don't take a sinful oath. If you don't mind your mother's displeasure, fear God's anger."

"Let me go!" shrieked the boy, beside himself with passion. He tore himself from his mother's arms, and rushed out of the house.

Meanwhile, poor little Maclou was sitting under an old willow-tree, very sore and very sad. He had pulled a handful of wild mint, dipped it in water, and bathed his bruised head and face. By his side sat Armelle, the straw-cutter's little daughter; she had torn up her handkerchief to bind his forehead, and was doing her best to comfort him. Maclou had told her his history, and was extolling the prowess of his beloved goose—the pride of the flock. "I should never have got away from him but for her, Armelle. He *did* hit hard with his sabots! Ah, he is a bad boy; but you are good, and then you are unhappy too—like me."

"What makes you call me unhappy?" said the little girl.

"Why, because your father drinks so."

"I love my father," said Armelle quickly.

"Well, you see, I haven't got a father," replied Maclou, after a moment's reflection; "I'm just a foundling—something like a duck hatched by a hen, I suppose; the chickens won't have anything to do with it, and drive it away."

By and by Maclou forgot his troubles, and the two children were playing together quite merrily when they were interrupted by a tremendous noise. The geese came waddling to them as fast as they could with their web-feet, flapping their short wings, and screaming with terror. The dog barked furiously, the cows ran wildly about the meadows, and the great black bull, the terror of the country, rushed about with his head down, his nostrils foaming, and his eyes bloodshot. At length, by the combined efforts of Maclou and the dog, the stragglers got together and counted; but one was missing—the great white goose, the pride of the flock, the valiant champion of her little master. He burst into tears, crying out:

"He has killed her! I know he has."

"O, no; he never, never could!" said Armelle; "he never could be such a coward."

"Say that again!" cried an angry voice behind the children.

It was Yves, mad with passion, and clenching his fists as he spoke.

"Very well, I will say it again, for you *are* a coward," said the brave child; "and because you are a coward you might strike me, only you won't, bad as you are, because you know my father would give you a thrashing. And what do you suppose Maclou's master will do to him? If your father had to punish you, he would give you a scolding, I suppose; even if he did more, he would just hit you a very little with a tiny switch. But Maclou is an orphan, with nobody to take his part; and his master will lay a great thick stick across his shoulders, and you know it! If all the boys in the village are afraid of telling the truth to 'wicked Yves,' as they call you, I'm not; so I tell you that you are a bad fellow,—yes I am here waiting, and you can strike if you dare!"

The little thing spoke so fearlessly, and looked so calmly at

him with her innocent eyes, that Yves slunk away cowed and crest-fallen, muttering, "I'll pay you off, too, some day, so look out."

The straw-cutter's little daughter did not even hear him; she was kneeling by poor Maclou, who had thrown himself sobbing on the ground, and trying all she could to comfort him; but his grief broke out more loudly than ever when his dog Finaud, after snuffing about in search of his missing charge, brought the dead goose to his master's feet.

"O my God," wailed the poor child, "how shall I ever go back to Marcotte! The goose would have fetched a couple of crowns, and the mayor's wife would have been sure to buy her for Twelfth-day. I am sure Marcotte will kill me, I had rather run away at once than face him."

Armelle was terror-stricken. Marcotte was a dreadful man, to be sure, but then there were things as bad or worse; it would soon be dark, and brave as she was when a tangible danger was in question, she was in mortal dread of ghosts and "louns-garous."

"It will be very dark," she said, "there's no moon."

"I know there isn't," said the frightened child.

"And isn't there anybody you will be sorry to leave?"

"O yes, Armelle, you; you are so good and kind; and then there is Aubin, that bad boy's brother, he is good too; and so is his father—he often gives me a loaf of bread and a bowl of milk, and good advice too; and his wife knitted me a pair of stockings at Christmas. There are plenty of good people at St. Aubin du Cormier; and besides, when one has always lived in a place, one is sorry to leave the trees, and the cows, and—*and everything.*"

"Well, then, don't go."

"But—there's Marcotte!"

"Yes, I know, there *is* Marcotte."

And the children sat down opposite each other silently, with their elbows on their knees, puzzling how to solve the difficulty.

They were roused from their meditations by a sharp shrill cry; and looking up saw Aubin standing before them, holding in his arms a struggling goose nearly as big as himself.

"There," he said, "take her home with you; I believe she beats the one you lost."

"But," said Maclou wonderingly, "what makes you give her to me?"

"To make up for the one my brother killed; don't you see?"

"But this goose is your father's—what will he say?"

"Why, it happens very luckily that I keep our flock of geese; so when one is found missing, they will just think I have lost it."

"But your father will scold you."

"Never mind that."

"Or beat you."

"My father's beating won't be like your master's, Maclou; it's not worth thinking of."

"O, how good you are!" and the little orphan clung round Aubin as if he could never leave him. Presently he said, "But what shall we do with the dead goose?"

"Armelle shall take it home with her, and keep our secret."

And so the three children went their different ways—Aubin to his comfortable bed, Armelle to her father's wretched hut, and poor little Maclou to a kennel where Marcotte's watch-dog used to live.

Aubin went to his home with a light step and heart, and yet he knew that he had incurred a punishment. No matter; better so than that poor little Maclou should suffer unjustly, or that his own kind parents should be grieved by this new instance of his brother's violence. Still, Aubin was but a child, and brave as he was he liked being punished as little as any other child; so he turned a little out of the way to say a prayer at the foot of an old wayside cross, where he often brought his childish troubles and difficulties. At the foot of this rude Calvary, in a niche, stood an image of our Lady. It was made of the coarsest pottery; over it hung a box, into which the village children now and then dropped a sou, and the shepherds often laid bunches of broom and heather on the steps. There she

stood, in her little niche, smiling on every one, and holding out her Child to the poor and suffering, to young and old; there was no rich canopy over her head, no jewels decked her crown; only the blue sky above her, and the sweet wild-flowers at her feet. No trained voices sang antiphons in her honor, but many a "Hail Mary" was whispered, many a simple hymn sung before her. And the birds perched on the arms of the cross, and greeted her with their carols. Ah, many were the confidences breathed into her ear; many the good resolutions formed at her feet; many a mother came there to pray for her children, and countless blessings fell from her sweet hands on bent heads and aching hearts. "Our Lady of the Road," they called her, and I am sure she showed the road to heaven to many a suppliant.

Aubin knelt down on the steps, laid a bunch of wild-flowers on them, and prayed for strength to do right, then for all he loved—not forgetting the straw-cutter's little girl—and lastly for Marquette. As he crossed the threshold of his home, he thought he caught a glimpse of Armelle crossing the yard, and carrying something white, and a large basket. But what could Armelle be doing at the farm? He entered the big room where meals were taken; his brother was there, but neither of his parents. He asked the carter where they were. The man pointed silently to the door of the inner room, and Aubin, startled and a little frightened, sat down by the fire, and Labrie, his dog, crouched at his feet. For this inner room was one which was only used on solemn and important occasions; the children of the house, indeed, were never allowed to enter it till the day of their First Communion. Afterwards they were only admitted for very grave reasons. To be sent for into the inner room was an alarming event.

Limping Louison now came in, full of consternation, exclaiming that one goose was missing; and at the same moment Jean and Marthe came in. Both looked very grave, and there were traces of tears in Marthe's eyes; but the master took his place as usual, said grace, and supper began. There was plenty of talking at the meal, much joking with Louison, and many compliments to the mistress on her cookery. The farm-servants discussed everything which concerned the interest of their employers with a kind of filial eagerness, which is peculiarly Breton, and the farmer, in return, treated them more like children than inferiors. On this particular evening, however, his words were few and short; and the servants were on the point of withdrawing, when he said to the herdsman:

"Are all the cattle right?"

"Yes, master."

"Jacquet, (to the shepherd) "did you count the sheep and goats?"

"Ay, master; they are all right."

"And your geese, Louison?"

"There is one short." And the old servant cast a pitying glance at Aubin.

The farmer turned to his son.

"You have been careless," he said severely. "Careless shepherds must be punished. Your godfather made you a present of six francs on New-year's day; the goose you have lost was worth quite as much as that; you have forfeited the money, others must not suffer for your fault."

"No, father; you are quite right."

"Now, children, it is bed-time; come and say good-night." Yves came slowly forward; and, as he knelt at his father's feet, Jean said, in a low and broken voice, "Take warning, Yves; do not disgrace your father."

Aubin meanwhile had gone to his mother for her blessing; and as she laid her hand on his head, she said, with great tenderness, "May God bless thee, as I do."

Aubin was not long before he fell asleep, and dreamed that he saw Armelle busily employed in removing the wings of the dead goose. As she did so, they grew larger and larger. She fastened them to Aubin's shoulders, and, to his surprise and delight he began flying about like a bird or an angel. A rough shake aroused him from his dream. Yves was standing by his bed with an excited expression.

"If you dare to say a word," he muttered.

"What about?"

"You know well enough; it's lucky for you that only I heard you just now talking about the goose, and Armelle, and angels, and the crown-piece."

"You know quite well, Yves, that I never meant to say a word."

This little incident will show the character of the brothers. As Yves grew older, his mother's anxieties increased. She was very gentle with the stubborn, ill-conditioned boy, always improving him with kindness, often with tears. She never praised his brother to him, for fear of exciting his temper; and with a mother's patient hopefulness she was always trying to find some tender spot in his heart; but all in vain. The good Abbé Kerdrec was untiring in his efforts for the amendment of this black sheep of his fold; but it really seemed as though the boy had neither heart nor conscience. The jealousy with which he had always regarded Aubin had become something terribly like hatred, ever since the story of the goose; he never would believe but that Aubin had told his mother everything. He was right in thinking that Marthe knew the truth, though not from his brother. The strawcutter's little daughter could not feel easy in her honest child's conscience at receiving Aubin's present. A fat goose would be very nice for supper, certainly; but was it quite right? And so, while Aubin was praying at the Calvary, she had taken the goose to the farmer's wife, and told her the whole story in confidence; for she did not forget Aubin's wish to screen his brother. Marthe was very much touched; she stooped down and kissed Armelle, telling her to keep the goose as a present from her, and giving her besides a loaf and a bottle of wine. So now there was a secret between Marthe and little Armelle.

There came a time when there seemed to be a hope of Yves changing for the better. The boys were preparing for their First Communion; and certainly both the curé and Jean and Marthe thought he was impressed by the instructions he had received. He was less gloomy and jealous, and once or twice he threw his arms round his brother and earnestly asked his forgiveness. The eve of the great day came; and when the boys knelt to ask pardon of their parents for all they had ever done to offend them, Yves covered their hands with kisses and tears. Poor Marthe! it seemed to her like her first-born's second and better birthday. When the family returned from the mass, at which the children had received their Lord for the first time, the parents led them into the inner room, and Jean Patriarche opened a large book which lay upon the table, and told the boys that it had been in the family for two hundred years. It was the book of the Holy Gospels, and on the fly-leaves were written important family events—births, marriages, etc.

"After this great day," said the farmer, "should you commit any serious fault—God forbid it should be a crime—I should be obliged to write it down in this book. May the necessity never occur. Here, my children, write down your names; and may God give you grace and strength to live and die his faithful servants."

There was character shown in the very way in which the lads signed their names. Yves scrawled his in a hasty slap-dash fashion; Aubin wrote slowly, feeling as he did so the solemnity of the occasion, and of his father's words. Jean added the date of the month and year; and the children left the room in silence. From this time the servants called them "our young masters," which much gratified the self-importance of Yves. Still, that was a small matter; and the boy seemed so altered for the better, that for six months Marthe was happy. At the end of that time, however, the old anxieties returned. He went seldomer to church, and grew cold and reserved with his mother; complaints of him were constantly being brought to his father. One day he had turned some cows into a clover field; on another he had overturned a neighbor's bee-hive, or robbed his orchard. Jean's remonstrances were met by indifference or insolence; and by degrees Yves took to frequenting the tavern on Sundays, and keeping company with lads as idle and mischievous

as himself; and now there was always one empty seat in the family bench at church, one absent at the evening meal on Sunday. The unhappy boy had become one of the habitués of the *Foaming Pitcher*, a low tavern, kept by a good-for-nothing old fellow named Machecoul, who kept a running account with Yves, not forgetting to charge interest. "Drink what you like, my boy," he would say, "you are a fine fellow, and like to treat your friends. Never mind the score now; we'll settle accounts when you come of age." Things went on in this way from bad to worse. If Aubin had shown the slightest inclination to follow in his brother's steps, the parents would have been compelled to send the latter away; but it was not so, and therefore they waited, wept and prayed. The farmer scarcely ever spoke to his eldest son now, except to give necessary orders, which were received in surly silence. Yves did his work, and did it well; but his father would rather have seen him fail with humility than succeed with insolent pride. It may seem strange that this very fault did not keep him from associating with the low set who frequented Machecoul's tavern; but the truth was that he was a sort of king among them, and the deference they showed him flattered his vanity. Now and then he had moments of tenderness towards his mother, and a look from her would make his heart swell; but his bitter envy of Aubin always stifled the good impulse, and he would turn away muttering, "She does not love me; he is all she cares for." Ah, no, poor misguided boy; it is the lost sheep we go after, the lost goat that we seek for. And so, like all mothers to whom our Lady has bequeathed her heritage of sorrow, Marthe hid the sword in her heart, and suffered silently.

This, then, was the state of things at Cadiorne when we introduced this family to our readers; plenty and prosperity, with a secret sorrow blighting all.

The shadows were lengthening; only a few sheafs had to be bound; the farmer, standing in the great wagon, caught them one by one as Yves threw them up with a strong, steady hand. "Cheerily, my lads," cried Jean Patriarche; "the mistress has supper ready, and it is growing late."

There is only one sheaf left now, but what a grand one it is—the harvest-home sheaf! It is always made with extra care, and presented with some ceremony to the master, whose business it is to pour on it a bottle of good old wine as he receives it. There is, I confess, a touch of paganism about this custom, but it is a pretty and graceful one nevertheless.

The farm servants and day-laborers go singing merrily to fetch the harvest-home sheaf, with its gay ribbons and bouquets, from the end of the field. Jean Baptiste and Peirrot are preparing to lift it, but stop with a startled exclamation at the sight of a ragged child sleeping quietly in the shadow of the sheaf. Poor little thing! her thin hand was holding some grains which she had rubbed from the husk before falling to sleep. "Holy Mary!" cried one of the men, "it is the straw-cutter's daughter!"

CHAPTER II.

THE HARVEST HOME.

And why was the straw-cutter's daughter so much to be pitied? Alas for poor little Armelle! she was worse than an orphan. Her mother had died worn out and heart-broken; a long course of ill-usage had hastened her end. Her husband was a hopeless drunkard; he would come reeling home from the *Foaming Pitcher* and load her with reproaches and abuse; sometimes the neighbors heard Annette's voice broken by sobs and then a scream; and more than once she had been seen running out of the house with her child in her arms, to pass the night in an outhouse or a yard. If it was very wet or cold she would knock timidly at the door of a farmhouse; and it would have been a hard heart indeed that could have refused shelter to the pale trembling woman, with her child's rosy face pressed to the bosom so ill-protected from the winter wind. When at day-break she went back to her home, little the pro-

pared the poor breakfast, and all with the most uncomplaining patience. But there came a day when Machecoul refused to let the straw-cutter add to his score unless he paid a part of his reckoning. This he could not do; high words followed, and Machecoul said: "Your wife has to beg her bread through your misconduct. Annette is my god-daughter, and if she comes to me, I shan't refuse her." The straw-cutter went home mad with fury, which only seemed increased by the silence with which his wife met his abuse. He dragged her out of the house, and as she fell, he pushed her with his foot against the doorstep. In the morning he remembered nothing of what had happened, but noticed with surprise that there were no preparations for his breakfast. He opened the house door; there Annette lay, her hair loose on her shoulders, her white face upturned; on the left temple was a deep red mark: he gave only one look, and fled from the place. Soon afterwards, a laborer, who wanted some straw to finish off his bee-hives, came to the door; he lifted up the poor young woman, bathed her face, and gradually she recovered consciousness. Recognizing the man, she said: "I had a fall, Catherinet, but it is nothing. Many thanks; I am sorry to have troubled you; my husband will be wanting his breakfast." She just managed to drag herself to the bed, and to say: "Catherinet, go and send the priest to me: God will repay you for your trouble." The man went, with tears in his eyes, to do her bidding. Poor Annette! her long martyrdom was all but ended. She confessed and received absolution, and received the "Bread of life" to support her on her last journey. She died very quietly, forgiving her husband, but troubled about her little one. "Who will take care of her?" she said to the priest. "Providence, my child," he answered, "is a good mother to the orphan."

Two neighbors stayed beside Annette's corpse: and when her husband came in, one of them said: "Take off your hat, Daniel; you must pay her some respect in death, though you made her life wretched."

He obeyed mechanically.

"Say a prayer, Daniel; she is gone to God, and she forgave you."

The straw cutter knelt, but he did not know how to pray. He could feel remorse though, and the thought of his heart was: "She never gave me an angry word, and I have killed her!"

The next day he followed her to the grave, and afterwards took his little girl in his arms, and leading by a string the goat whose milk had fed her, went to one of the women who had watched by his wife, and agreed to pay so much a month for taking care of the child.

Little Armelle grew and thrived. Chantefleur doted on her; the only trouble was that every now and then her father talked of having her home; but the good woman put him off, and said he had better wait till she was old enough to cook his dinner and mind the house. He saw that the child was terribly afraid of him, and this made him furious.

When Armelle was seven years old he took her home. It was a sad change for the poor child; but the thing that she most missed was hearing Chantefleur talk of her mother. One day she had put a rosary round the child's neck, telling her that her mother said it every day; and never since then had Armelle failed to say it too. She pulled up daisy-tufts, and planted them on her grave, and gathered the first violets, and pretty little milk-worts to lay there. One day a little boy gave her a bird's nest, in which were some downy nestlings; she put it in a wild rose-bush which grew by the grave, and told the little birds to sing to her mother when they were old enough. Chantefleur had always kept her neat and tidy, but now the frocks were in rags, and the little feet bare. She was very ignorant. Daniel refused to send her to school, and very often she had to beg.

One evening, when she was about ten years old, her father came in with a coarse untidy-looking woman, whom he ordered Armelle to call "mother."

"My mother is dead," said the child gravely.

"This is your second mother."

"Chantefleur is my second mother."

"Indeed! and what is my wife?"

The child seemed stupefied; then, after a while, she said gently: "Father, now that you have some one else to look after you, you do not want me."

"I don't turn you out, mind."

"But I am going," she answered.

"A good riddance;" cried La Gervaise, for that was the woman's name.

Armelle went up to her father and asked him to give her her mother's wedding-ring. The man turned pale; he had placed it on the finger of La Gervaise. The child had noticed what seemed to her a sacrilege.

"Give it her," muttered Daniel. "I can get you another."

The woman drew it off, and threw it rudely on the ground. Armelle picked it up, kissed it, fastened it to her mother's rosary, and then said slowly and sorrowfully: "Good-bye, father."

The man's heart smote him.

"Stop here," he said, "and I promise never to beat you again."

But La Gervaise rose, and facing him, said resolutely: "She or I—choose between us."

Then Armelle repeated, "Good-bye, father;" opened the door, knelt down, kissed the doorstep, and went away.

It was a lovely night; the stars looked down from a cloudless sky. Armelle did not feel lonely; it seemed as if some one was beside her taking care of her; her mother or her angel-guardian—perhaps both. She walked straight to the church-yard. What a pretty carpet the turf made, starred over with daisies; and how sweetly the nightingale was singing! She lay down on the grave and slept quietly till morning; then she awoke with the sun, the swallows in the tower, and the church-bell. She slipped into a confessional, for she was ashamed of her rags; and when mass was over, she slipped out again.

What was she to do? Chantefleur had left the neighborhood for a few days. But, to be sure, it was harvest time; she would soon glean a little bundle; the miller was a kind man, and would give her in exchange for it a loaf of bread. Providence guided her to the field of Jean Patriarche; she gleaned all day, ate the corn, which she rubbed out in her hands, drank from the stream which ran at the bottom of the field, made a dessert of blackberries, and then quite tired out, she laid her bunch of ears beside her, and fell asleep in the shadow of the harvest-home sheaf, with the names of God and her mother on her lips.

She awoke with a start as Pierrot's cry brought the reapers to the spot. She looked round her with a scared expression, pushed her tangle of hair back from her little pale face, and said: "I may keep my bundle, mayn't I?"

"Poor little mite," said Pierrot, "how hard she must have worked to get all that! I'll tell you what, you fellows, I've got an idea; suppose the straw-cutter's daughter gives the sheaf to the master?"

"Well said! a capital notion!"

A wreath of wheat-ears and corn-flowers had been made, ready for the ceremony, and this was placed on Armelle's head. The men undid the wisp of straw which bound the sheaf, and placed the child in the middle of it; only her head was visible.

"Poor little maid!" said Pierrot; "I wish she had poppies on her cheeks, as well as corn-flowers in her eyes."

"Up with the sheaf, the bonny harvest-home sheaf!"

Père Patriarche was sitting quietly on the wagon-pole, waiting for the sheaf; his sons were beside him; Yves was looking unusually pleasant, and the father felt almost happy.

"The sheaf seems tolerably heavy," he said, smiling.

The men laid it with a laugh at their master's feet.

"It is good grain," said old Pierrot, "which the good God has ripened. See what He has hidden in the sheaf—a bird without a nest, a daisy plucked up by the roots. See, master, we have made her a bed of fresh straw, just as our Lady did for her little Jesus."

Patriarche could not understand a word of all this, till a pretty little face met his wondering eyes, as Pierrot's sickle cut the straw band, and the golden ears fell in a shower at Armelle's feet. The good farmer's eyes were wet. "Poor little lark," he said, "did you make a nest in the corn?"

"I was gleaming," answered the little one, "and I fell asleep, and it was Pierrot—"

"Pierrot is a very clever fellow," returned Jean, with a kind smile. "You shall have the harvest-home sheaf; my child. When God gives abundantly, our hands must be opened like His. But your father?"

"He is married again—to La Gervaise."

"Good heavens! And you are turned out of doors?"

"I am sure father would have kept me; but—"

"But he is afraid of La Gervaise. I see—a woman like that! What a shame! What a sin—"

Patriarche broke off abruptly; then, at a sign from him, Armelle was lifted into the high wagon, the two lads led the horses, and he himself followed slowly and thoughtfully.

It was a pretty, yet a sad sight; the little thing with her bare feet crossed, sitting smiling on her golden throne, crowned with flowers and innocence.

As soon as they reached the farm, Jean Patriarche took his wife's hand, and saying, "I want to speak to you," led her into the family sanctuary, the inner room.

"Wife," he said, "I do not want to give you a command; I do not even ask you to do what I wish for my sake; I only want to say this—we have a wound deep down in our hearts; let us move the good God to cure it by a good action. The straw-cutter is going from bad to worse. The house where La Gervaise is mistress is not a fit house for Armelle. Last night she slept on her mother's grave, and the angels watched over her. Where can she sleep to-night? Where can she go to-morrow? Our men, who found her sleeping by the sheaf, brought her to me like a dove in its nest; and I have been thinking—"

Marthe opened the Book of the Gospels, and taking a pen she wrote, in a bold, firm hand:

"The day of our harvest home, 18—, Jean and Marthe Patriarche have adopted Armelle, the straw-cutter's daughter, and taken her for their own child."

The farmer kissed her gravely and silently, and Marthe said, in a low voice "May our Lord have mercy on Yves!" Then she opened the great oaken cupboard, saying, "I have all Jeanne's things here, and now that God has given me another daughter, they will do for her."

So Armelle was washed, combed and dressed. Marthe put a gold cross round her neck, replaced the garland on her head, and then sat down in the great arm-chair by her husband's desk, while he threw the door wide open, and made sign for his sons and servants to enter. Then he rose, took off his hat, and said "Before God and before our own conscience, we promise to bring up Armelle as a good Christian girl. Love her, all of you, as you love us, for His sake who has loved us."

Poor little Armelle! she could hardly believe that it was all true. The only cloud was, that Yves did not look at her as kindly as Aubin did; she was afraid she should have only one brother. But troubles are soon over at her age; and besides why should Yves not like her? The story of the goose was four years old.

At the end of the evening, Jean spoke with honest indignation of Daniel's conduct.

"Patience," said Marthe; "the child will save him yet."

"His wife tried, and it cost her her life."

Martha answered, "What is that as the price of a soul?"

CHAPTER III.

THE STRAW-CUTTER'S BARGAIN.

ARMELLE'S business was to keep the sheep; Aubin had charge of the horses and cows. The two went out together, the boy carrying the basket containing their dinners, the girl with a

book in her pocket, and her distaff stuck in her girdle. In winter, the first thing was to make a fire. Aubin managed capitably with heather and dead branches, and the children sat before it on two large stones, chatting merrily. They baked their potatoes and chestnuts in the ashes, sang songs, and talked about Marthe's kindness and Jean Patriarche's generosity. Sometimes Maclou joined them. When Finaud was playing with Labrie, Maclou was never far from Aubin and Armelle. His love for them was a passion, a worship, as it is apt to be with the forlorn and desolate; he would have died for either of them. After their dinner, they fed the birds, which were so tame that they came to pick up the crumbs under their very sabots. Sometimes Aubin read stories to Armelle. She conceived a great idea of the dignity of her occupation when she heard that Paris had been saved from a terrible king by a shepherdess, and a king of France restored to his throne by another. What a pity her name was not Genevieve or Jeanne, instead of Armelle.

When the day of her First Communion came, she wished to see her father, and her adopted parents took her to his cottage; it was empty. Marcotte, who was passing, said, "Go to Machecon's tavern."

The child turned away with a shudder, saying to Marthe, "Mother, let us go home."

Her father met them, singing, shouting, and cursing. Armelle trembled from head to foot; but without hesitating a moment, she went up to him and said, "Father, I have been to your house to ask your blessing. God is giving me a great grace, and I want you to share in it."

"Is that why you are all in white? You are a fine looking lady now, fed and clothed with the best."

She took his hand fearlessly.

"What do you want?" Daniel asked.

"I want to say just one word to you."

"Well what is it?"

"Father, what you say is true; I am well clothed and loved at Jean Patriarche's; and yet, for all that, my heart often aches. I should like to share your poverty and your trouble. I want to be back in the house where mother died. Send away La Gervaise, father—they say she is not really your wife—and let me come back and take care of you and love you. Oh father you don't know how sweet it is to be loved. May I come to you?"

The man burst into a loud laugh.

"You want to preach, I suppose."

"No," answered Armelle.

"Well, then, to cry as your mother did."

"I will not cry," said the child.

"Children are only a trouble. La Gervaise suits me best."

He went away, and Armelle clung to Marthe, weeping bitterly. By and by she said, "Mother, it would have broken my heart to leave you, but—"

"I understand, child; and don't you suppose I should have been sorry to lose my daughter? But there are only two roads, you see—a wrong and a right one—and when you took the right one, I wasn't going to stop you. Why, Armelle, I couldn't love you so much unless you did your duty."

So there was a heavy cloud overshadowing that blessed day—the brightest and fairest in a child's life. She was never again the same merry laughing creature as before; she grew very thoughtful—almost gloomy at times; she knew too much now. It was well for her that she could rest on the tender and faithful heart of Marthe. She felt so safe under her motherly wing, so sheltered by her love. The conduct of Yves was another grief to the poor girl. This indifference had turned to positive hatred. He tried to wound and humiliate her in every possible way. He told her that he had met her father at the tavern, or that he had seen him fighting. He grudged her the clothes she wore, and the bread she ate; he would sit smoking by the well while he made her draw heavy pails to fill the trough. She never refused to do anything; she never complained. This cruel Yves was the son of one who was both her master and her father, and she obeyed him in silence.

Armelle was turned fifteen. Pretty, pious, and the adopted daughter of the rich farmer, she had plenty of suitors; but she refused them all, saying simply that she was too young, and wished to stay with Marthe.

One winter's evening it was snowing fast, as Armelle was bringing her sheep home; the wind was very high, and she could hardly keep the hood of her cloak over her head, as she struggled on, blinded by the thick flakes. Presently Labrie barked furiously, and the sheep pressed close together, shivering more from fear than cold. Something red, glaring, was a few steps before her. The terrified girl fell on her knees, unable either to cry out or run away. The two flaming eyes, for such they were, came nearer. She felt as if they drew her irresistibly towards them. Then she saw dark shadowy things like great, hideous, rough dogs. Labrie leaped gallantly on one of the creatures, the other sprung upon Armelle. She felt suffocated—a hot fiery breath was on her cheek. She had a dim consciousness of a struggle around her, and then all was darkness. When she came to herself, the farm servants, holding torches, were kneeling beside her. On the snow was a pool of blood; beside it a dead wolf. "Hush!" said Marthe, as she tried to speak, "you shall hear everything presently:" she was taken into the great hall at the farm. There sat Aubin, pale as death, leaning his head on the table; beside him stood Yves, his hand bleeding, and his forehead bound with a handkerchief.

"Oh!" cried Armelle, "what has happened?"

"It was a wolf; two wolves, rather," answered Yves shortly.

"You were all but devoured by one," added his mother.

"And Yves saved my life?"

"I only killed the wolf."

"The wolf was going to kill me?"

"Well, and if I did save your life, what would that prove?"

She went up to him, and said, in a voice trembling with emotion: "It would prove that you have a tiny bit of love for your little sister. No one can give more than his life for any one."

"I don't know," answered Yves brusquely. "I think plenty of people give their lives, or their deaths, if you like, easily enough, from love, or hatred, or whim, or because they are fools; but to sacrifice one's life, one's whole life, day by day, hour by hour, that's different."

"It is much sweeter," said Armelle.

"Now, look here; if you knew that you could save Daniel from sin or damnation by throwing yourself into the flames or under a mill-wheel, would you not do it?"

"Oh, yes."

"But would you consent to live with him—close to him—always; to see him jealous of your services, of your love? Would you agree to let him tyrannize over you, when all the while there was a peaceful life ready for you elsewhere?"

"Yes, Yves; I would."

"Why, it would be a hell!"

"No; a martyrdom."

"But without any one to force you to it?"

"There is duty, Yves."

"And would you sacrifice everything to duty?"

"Everything. But," she said, after a pause, "your hand is not properly bound up; the blood is coming through the linen. Yves, let me see to it." And she gently undid the handkerchief, bathed and dressed the gaping wound, with a light tender hand. "You will not hate me any more?" she asked winningly.

"Do you love me, then?"

"Certainly I do."

"I know what that means—just nothing," Then, all at once, he broke out passionately: "And have I not reason to hate you! You have taken from me my place in the house; you are slowly stealing away what little love my mother has left for me; you are robbing me of my birthright!"

"Be silent," said Aubin. "I will neither have you ask her whether she loves you nor say that you hate her."

Angry words were rapidly exchanged, and Armelle with diffi-

culty quieted the brothers. Soon after, Aubin went out; and when the farmer and his wife returned, Yves and their adopted daughter were talking together happily enough.

From the day the straw-cutter's daughter had stood up so bravely in Maclou's defence, Yves had disliked her from his heart. When his parents adopted her the dislike became positive hatred. But gradually another feeling came; I can scarcely say to replace the other, for even the love he was beginning to cherish for Armelle was so strange, so vehement, so absolutely without any softening influence, that it seemed still to retain some of the old hatred. As to the simple happy child herself, she guessed nothing of all this, but went on quietly feeding her sheep, singing her songs, and reading the stories of St. Geneviève and Jeanne d'Arc. When the Abbé Kerdrec spoke of her to Jean and Marthe, he called her his "saintly little shepherdess."

The long evenings had begun; the women knitted or shelled peas. Loïc the bell-ringer, the musician of the village, brought his "binion," and played sad or merry tunes, or told stories of ghosts and "loups-garoux" that made one's hair stand on an end. He delighted in giving his audience a fright, and seeing how close the girls kept together when the time came to separate. Brittany is such a place for "eerie" sights and sounds. Think of all the "fairy rocks," the mysterious "lavandieres" of the streams, the "white ladies" in the ruins; then the "death chariot," which passes noiselessly along, and the "hollah" of the "night huntsmen!" It is all delightfully terrifying, and Père Loïc was a great favorite with the young people. He was the first to see how it was with Yves and to give him a hint. "Take my word for it," he said, "and give up that idea; the hawk does not mate with the dove, nor the lamb with the wolf." These words set him thinking. "She *shall* love me," he said, and he set about trying to win her with all his might. Marthe was full of joy at the change in his manners and conduct, and Armelle treated him with affectionate kindness. All was sunshine at the farm.

Lent was over. The Paschal candle was lighted in the church, and Abbé Kerdrec had preached on the threefold resurrection; that of our Lord, that of our hearts, and that of the teeming earth.

Marthe and her husband, Armelle and Aubin, came out of church full of peace and joy. Aubin gathered some "Alleluia flowers," and offered them to Armelle saying: "They are not to be gathered in Lent; it would make our Lady weep; but she smiles on those who pluck them at Easter."

"Thanks, Aubin; I will put them on my mother's grave."

"And may I pray there with you," he asked timidly, "as if I were her son?"

"And my brother."

They knelt, one on each side of Annette's grave, and prayed silently for a few minutes. Then Aubin bent down till his face touched the ground, and said: "Annette, Annette, let me tell you that I love Armelle."

The girl rose from her knees; before her, just behind Aubin, stood the Abbé Kerdrec. Then, without a blush, with the grave religious simplicity of the Breton character, she drew from her finger her mother's ring, and gave it to the priest.

"In the name of your mother, Armelle, your humble holy mother, I approve of Aubin as your husband; and as I know the mind of Jean and Marthe Patriarche, I betroth you here to each other, in the sight of God and of the holy dead."

The Abbé Kerdrec walked home with the affianced pair, telling them the story of Tobias and Sara; he bade them remember that life is a pilgrimage, and that their happiness depended on their love for each other and for God. Then he said that they were very young, and had better not marry till after harvest.

"O, father," said Aubin, "I could wait Jacob's seven years now. I could do anything so that I may have Armelle for my wife at last."

"Very well, my children; I will settle it all with your father. You will do well, I am sure, and it will be a pleasure to me to give you to each other."

There was quite a grand dinner at the farm. Marthe surpassed herself. The mayor was present, with a friend of his, a magistrate from Rennes, a little, sharp, thin man, with a voice like a peacock. He wanted a vote from Patriarche, and therefore did him the honor of drinking his wine and eating his chickens. Patriarche had no fancy for men of the law. As a rule, country people consider them a bloodthirsty race, from the *gendarme* to the *avocat*. The *procureur impérial* is the worst of the lot. The only legal functionary they consider useful is the *garde champêtre*, who looks after their orchards. The farmer, therefore, was perfectly civil, but very careful to support the dignity of the spade and the plough. Yves was in a state of suppressed fury with the dry little man, who kept looking at Armelle through his eyeglass. She, on her part, saw nothing of what was going on; she kept touching her left hand with her right; it seemed so strange to feel no ring there. Then she thought that Aubin would soon give her another, with their names engraved inside, and a date, which the Abbé Kerdrec would bless. She remembered the Alleluia flowers which she had laid on Annette's grave, and that the curé was going to tell the great event of the day to Jean and Marthe. The tears sprang to her eyes at the thought of kneeling for Marthe's blessing.

After dinner, Patriarche went into the garden with his guests. The Abbé Kerdrec said a few words in a low voice to Marthe, who led the way to the family sanctuary, and the lovers went for a stroll in a little green paddock surrounded by a thick hawthorn hedge. They talked of their childish days, of how they had loved each other all their lives, of the happiness which awaited them. Then Marthe and the Abbé joined them, and soon after, Patriarche.

"God bless you, my children; we have settled everything—M. l'Abbé and I. We shall have to see to our daughter's *trousseau*, that's all; there will be no house to find for you: the old folks would be lost if you left them."

Meanwhile, Yves met Daniel in the road, and invited him to accompany him to Machecoul's. He had overheard the conversation of Aubin and Armelle in the meadow, and his resolution was taken.

"I can't come," answered the straw-cutter; "he refuses me credit now."

"Come on, I'll pay," said Yves.

The fact was, Daniel's peccadilloes had multiplied of late; he had taken to poaching, if to no worse. When a hen came in his way, it was seen no more; he borrowed, and forgot to pay; everything short of actual stealing he was capable of; but he had not gone so far as taking money, and he made the strangest compromises with his conscience. The miserable man was very much altered in appearance lately; there was a wild wandering look in his eyes; sometimes he laughed idiotically; at others he would remain for hours without speaking, and then suddenly tell such strange weird stories, that Loïc himself might have been jealous. His hands trembled a good deal; still, he was as good as ever with the scythe and the sickle, but more gloomy, silent and fierce-looking every day. When he went by, scythe in hand, the children ran away in a fright, and said he looked like the picture of death.

When he had drunk some wine he brightened up a little.

"Capital wine this," he said.

"A barrel of it in one's cellar wouldn't be a bad thing in the winter," suggested Yves.

"I believe you."

"Well, Père Daniel, I will send you a couple."

"And what will there be to pay?"

"Not a farthing."

"Nothing at all?"

"One word, just one, that's all."

"Let us hear it by all means."

"You have a daughter—"

"And a pretty one, too."

"Well, will you have me for a son-in-law?"

"Patriarche would not allow it."

"Yes, he would. Come, Daniel, two hogsheds of wine,

and three hundred francs on the wedding-day. I will thatch and whitewash your cottage, and give you a cow into the bargain."

"That's all right; but I don't half like giving up Armelle."

"Why you turned her out of doors."

"Never mind that; I can take her back whenever I like now, but if she's married I can't."

"I'll pay you so much a year regularly."

"How much?"

"A hundred and fifty francs."

"It must be all properly done, mind; drawn up by a notary; and on the whole I prefer three hundred francs down. Give me a bill for that sum, payable at three months date, and you shall be married at the end of that time."

"Done!" cried the young man.

When Machecoul came in, he gave Yves a knowing wink, and said:

"Are things going on all right?"

"Capitally; I am going to marry his daughter."

"My daughter and my debts."

Yves took the straw-cutter home, and returned to the farm with his head in wild confusion. Was it not all a dream, what he had heard behind the hedge, and his wicked bargain with Daniel?

CHAPTER VI.

ANNETTE'S GRAVE.

EARLY the next morning, the Abbé Kerdrec went to the straw-cutter's house. It was a wretched place. The walls were damp, black, and cracked; the thatch hung green and decaying on the rotten beams; the door was almost off its hinges. The inside was no better. Ragged clothes lay about the place; in one corner fowls were pecking on a heap of straw; broken plates, cabbage leaves, potato-parings, strewed the floor; and it all looked doubly disgusting on that fresh, sweet morning, when everything was so bright and beautiful—when Nature had donned her green robe, gemmed with dewdrops, and wreathed her brow with flowers. But darker yet is the contrast between the song of the birds, the rustle of the breeze, the perfume of the flowers and the blasphemy of the man who ignores or insults the God of whose Uncreated Beauty all this fair world of nature is a faint image.

The good priest walked along slowly and thoughtfully, blessing all the creatures of God. A book was passed through his girdle, but it was the open book of Nature that he was studying, and his eyes were full of love and gratitude. He drew near to the straw-cutter's house—it was like a blot on the fair landscape. Daniel was walking before the door, reflecting on last night's transaction, and never noticed the Abbé Kerdrec till he spoke.

"Good morning, my friend. I come from Jean Patriarche, who has commissioned me to ask your consent to Armelle's marriage with his son."

"My consent! Certainly, M. l'Abbé—with all my heart."

"I am glad you see no objection; the marriage will be after harvest."

"O, indeed; is it put off till then?"

"It will be a time of leisure then; I want you to give a written consent."

"Are you afraid that I shall go back from my word?"

"No; but I am afraid that you will pay too many visits to Père Machecoul."

"I see; all right. La Gervaise, bring us paper and ink."

"I have brought everything with me," said the priest; "let me read you the form, and then you will only have to sign," and he read: "I, Daniel, commonly called 'the straw-cutter,' hereby give my consent to the marriage of my daughter Armelle with Aubin Patriarche, younger son of Jean Patriarche, of the farm of Cadiorne."

"You have made a mistake, M. l'Abbé; you have written 'Aubin' instead of 'Yves.'"

"Yves? It is for Aubin that Jean and Marthe ask your daughter."

"Well, then, it's a mess," said the straw-cutter, "for only last evening I promised her to Yves."

"It was a rash promise, Daniel. Aubin is a young man of unblemished character, and sincerely attached to Armelle, who returns his affection."

"All that means nothing to me. Yves suits me best; and a girl must obey her father."

"And do you dare to call yourself by that title?" asked the priest indignantly. "Did you not drive the child from her home? Are you not insulting your dead wife by the presence of the woman you have put in her place? What have you done for the poor girl who has been brought up by the Patriarches? You only remember that you are father in order to tyrannize over her; the duties of a father you shamelessly forget! Daniel, beware of braving God's anger!"

"You may spare your sermon, M. l'Curé. The long and short of the matter is this: Armelle is not of age, and I am her father. She either marries Yves Patriarche or comes back to me."

"You have no right to dictate terms," said the Abbé Kerdrec; "you lost that right the day you brought that woman to your house."

"I may engage a servant, I suppose; and it is my own affair."

"You will find that it is that of others, too."

"Very well; but in any case I refuse to sign that paper."

"Daniel, be merciful. Yves is a bad fellow, and Aubin and Armelle love one another. Have you never loved any one yourself—not your mother, nor Annette—"

"No," thundered the miserable man; "my mother cursed me, and Annette—"

"Forgave you."

"All I know is this, I want wine and I want money. Yves will pay Machecoul and secure my credit. There!" and he turned his back upon the priest and went into the house.

Very slowly and sadly the Abbé Kerdrec returned to the presbytery. As he passed the mayor's house, he saw him at the window, and the thought struck him that he would ask his advice. He told the whole story to the worthy man, who reflected for a minute, and then said:

"Don't despair yet, M. l'Abbé. Daniel's bad life is notorious. If Annette's death had been inquired into too closely, things would have looked ugly for him; but nothing was said for the child's sake. Now, however, we can put a spoke into his wheel. We can't force him to give his daughter to Aubin; but neither can he force her to marry Yves. There remains the question of his threat to take Armelle back. That's not to be thought of—here we step in. The innocent child shall not live with La Gervaise; the law will not help Daniel there. We deprive him of his paternal rights, hold a meeting, and make Patriarche Armelle's guardian. She lives at the farm until she is twenty-one, and then marries Aubin."

"I see that," said the Curé; "but it is a terrible misfortune that both brothers have asked her in marriage on the same day. Well, we must trust in God!"

"And rely on me," said the mayor.

On his way home the Abbé Kerdrec met poor Aubin, told him the sad story, and consoled him as best he could. He shrank from letting him know that his brother was his rival; and he advised him to go to the farm and say nothing of all this trouble.

Patriarche was full of glee; he whistled as he walked, raised Pierrot's wages, gave Baptiste a pair of shoes, and Joseph a neckerchief; Louison was presented with two jackets of russet cloth, and every beggar who came to the door received a luncheon of bread and a mug of cider.

Meanwhile, Daniel was on his way to the farm. Jean Patriarche was in the garden; the straw-cutter went up to him, and said that it was his intention to take his daughter back.

"Your reasons?" asked the farmer.

"I have no reasons to give; she is my daughter, and I have the law on my side."

"And I have all honest men on mine; so until you are armed with a legal authority, I forbid you to enter my house."

Daniel went straight to M. Gorju, the mayor, who told him that the life he was leading deprived him of his natural rights, and that his daughter was perfectly justified in refusing to live with him. The man was furious; he entered Machecoul's tavern, where he found Yves whom he told of Aubin's proposal to Armelle, and of his own interview with M. Gorju. Yves remained lost in thought for some time; then he said:

"You must marry La Gervaise."

"Anything but that."

"Send her away then."

"I dare not; she would kill me."

"Look here; I will give you four thousand francs instead of three the day you marry her; and you can take away Armelle the same day."

We will not linger over the hateful compact; it was so unutterably base, that bad as both the men were, they felt ashamed of it, and separated as soon as possible.

A few days later Daniel's banns were published during mass. The Abbé Kerdrec did not fathom the plot, but he had a presentiment of misfortune.

The straw-cutter married La Gervaise, the village children hooting after them all the way home. Daniel went straight to the mayor, and said:

"Monsieur, there is nothing to prevent Armelle's return home. I mean to claim her."

"God will judge you?" answered Gorju.

On his way to the farm he passed the Curé, and told him his errand.

"God forgive you!" said the priest.

Marthe had told the young girl of her father's marriage. Never dreaming of all it involved, she was almost glad, and said:

"It is better so."

They were all assembled for the midday meal, when the straw-cutter entered. Armelle trembled, Yves turned livid, Patriarche remained calm and dignified.

"What do you want here?" he asked.

"I want to speak to you elsewhere," said Daniel. "Let us go into that room—is it not there that family affairs are arranged?"

The farmer and his wife entered the inner room. Jean signed to Armelle to follow.

"The matter is this," said the straw-cutter, "both your sons have asked my daughter's hand. I refuse it to Aubin; I give it to Yves."

"I shall not permit Yves to marry Armelle," answered the farmer; "he is not worthy of her."

"And I refuse my consent to her marriage with Aubin. The child is under age, and I am come to take her with me."

The poor girl fell on her knees, weeping convulsively.

"You are doing a wicked thing," said Patriarche. "You have never thought about your daughter till now, that you mean to break her heart. But I know her well; she would die rather than murmur, die—like her mother—with a prayer on her lips, and forgiveness in her eyes. I will take her myself to your house; but you must give her time for her tears and farewells; and now go, Daniel."

The straw-cutter obeyed in silence. Then poor Armelle abandoned herself to an agony of grief. In heartrending accents she implored Marthe not to send her away to La Gervaise—to the house where her mother had died of misery. Patriarche raised her tenderly. "My daughter," he said, "my heart's own child, do not give way so terribly. When the rain lays the corn, the sun raises it again. God and his angels will be with you. There is an end to everything on earth. You will be eighteen in August, then there will be three years to wait. Take courage; they will soon pass. And there will be

the Sundays—you shall always have your old place on the old bench."

"O how good you are! It is a heavy cross, but I am a Christian, and my father—"

Patriarche took her in his arms: "My daughter, we shall suffer with you; remember that; now dry your eyes. We will go together to the field where Pierrot hid you in the sheaf, and then to your mother's tomb to ask her to bless and watch over you."

As they passed into the hall, he called to Aubin to come with them. Yves rose to follow but he dared not disobey the glance and gesture with which his father stopped him. The parents signed to Aubin and Armelle to walk on together. When Aubin sobbed uncontrollably as they knelt by Annette's grave, the girl said: "Listen to me, Aubin, and do not make the trouble harder to me; it is like death to me to leave the farm; but I have tried to look up to the Cross, and our Lord's Sacred Wounds. We will be true to each other, and wait. And O, Aubin, you will have Marthe; but I shall have no one. Don't make me weaker than I am; remember the first thing is to do our duty, everywhere, always, and before all things." Then she bent across the grave towards him, and said in a low voice: "There is another sorrow in store for you. Remember one thing: whatever happens, however hard, however terrible, you must forgive—God commands you to do so, and I entreat you."

"Armelle, what do you mean?"

"I can say no more; remember my words when you are tempted to revenge."

Then she laid her hand on his forehead, as though she blessed him; and without another word left the churchyard, holding Jean's arm. When they reached Daniel's gate Armelle gave one long embrace to him and his wife, and went in; while they returned to the farm, silent and heartbroken. Armelle laid her little bundle on a stool, and said good evening to her father. Presently she asked where she was to sleep. "In Blanchette's stable." Blanchette was the goat which had been her nurse. She undid her bundle, took out some sheets, went to the stable, made an impromptu broom of some bunches of heath that lay about, swept the place, arranged a straw bed, covered it with her sheet, and went back to the house without a trace of ill-temper.

She had everything to do; her stepmother spent her time gossiping in the village, whilst Armelle washed, cooked, and cleaned the house, with the utmost diligence and care. Only, when Sunday came, no matter what orders were given to her, she went to Mass. Her place was always kept by Marthe. After Mass she went to Annette's grave. A black cross marked it now; and at the foot, every Sunday, she found fresh flowers which Aubin had laid there during the night. And so the days went by, and every Sunday told that another week had gone.

After a time, Armelle was forbidden by her father to join the Patriarche family at Mass; she saw them at the church, and that was all. Her chief comfort was her old friend Chantefleur; she persisted in coming to see Armelle in spite of the rudeness and insolence of La Gervaise; she brought her loving messages from Marthe, and tried to cheer her as much as possible.

Yves became more gloomy and irritable as the time of Armelle's majority approached—sometimes he was half mad, and felt ready to crush her under his feet. Her father too was furious with her; he had conquered Annette, but it seemed as if he could not conquer her daughter. He had insulted, beaten her—all in vain.

Never once had Yves dared to speak to his brother of the rivalry between them; he felt that everything was in Aubin's favor—his high character, his parent's affection, Armelle's love; while he himself had nothing but her unnatural father's favor. And his heart told him that Armelle would never yield.

CHAPTER V.

TEN LIVES FOR ONE.

One evening the two brothers walked together to a neighboring village; their father wanted a tool repaired at the ploughwright's and a new knife bought.

It was a sweet still evening; only now and then heavy masses of clouds hid the moon. Aubin's step was light, his heart glad; for in a few months Armelle would be free, and his wife.

"There is no need to hurry so," said Yves; "it is a fine night."

Aubin slackened his pace. Then they began talking of the old tailor who was making a wedding suit for a neighbor of theirs, of another neighbor who had taken a farm, of the fair which was just over, of the crops, and of the village girls.

"The rose of St. Aubin du Cormier is in no hurry to marry, it seems."

"Time enough," said Aubin.

"You think so, do you?"

"Certainly I do."

"She has a reason for waiting, perhaps?"

Aubin made no answer.

The spade was set to rights, the knife bought, and the brothers left the shop.

"It seems strange for us to be walking together; it does not happen often," said Yves.

"Whose fault is that? I heartily wish that we were more together. I have always loved you, Yves, in spite of everything."

"As much as Labrie and Louison?"

"Yves, you are not just; you know very well you have estranged yourself from us without reason."

"Without reason?" And Yves turned passionately upon him. "I tell you there was a time in my life when a girl's hand could have led me anywhere. One look of hers was enough. If only—But no; she was afraid of me; and besides there was one who had been beforehand with me, one who knew how to please and flatter and speak fair; a fellow without spirit or courage, always tied to his mother's apron string. And I was told that Armelle loved Aubin—for I mean you—the very day on which I asked her hand."

"We could not guess that, either of us."

"But you might have given her up! Are you to have everything—our mother's caresses and the love of the straw-cutter's daughter too? Suppose I were to say that you *must* give her up, that I *will* marry her?"

"Yves do not let us speak of it; it does no good to either of us; and Armelle is my betrothed."

"I will not hear of it; you shall never marry her! Once more, will you give her up?"

"No."

Yves seized Aubin's arm, and shook him furiously. The young man tried in vain to get free. In the struggle Yves felt in his pocket the knife they had bought. A cloud hid the moon—there was a terrible cry—a heavy fall—the cloud passed over the moon, and the pale light showed a man rushing madly from the spot.

Later in the evening Yves went home. There were many lights about; people coming and going; there was a light too in the inner room. Labrie lay, whining, in one corner; Louison was moving about with a scared face; in the next room people were talking in awe-struck whispers. Marthe entered; "Who is that?" she said; then recognizing Yves, "where did you leave your brother?"

"In the shop."

"And where have you been since?"

"At Macheoul's."

Bewildered with terror, she caught his hand and dragged him into the inner room.

"Swear," she said; "swear on this book."

He remained motionless. She bade him take off his hat, and

he obeyed her mechanically. Then she fixed her eyes upon his face with an expression of horror, and leaving the room for a minute, she returned with a bowl of water in one hand and a looking-glass in the other. A drop of blood was on his forehead. "Stay here," she said in an agonized whisper; "stay here before the Crucifix."

She went out quickly; the doctor had come to attend to Aubin.

Returning from a wedding, Loic had seen something dark lying in the road; it was Aubin. The old man managed to carry him to the farm, and Pierrot ran for the doctor. The news spread like wild fire, and in a short time the gendarmes, the *garde champêtre* and the Curé were in the room. The commissary of police and the magistrate had been sent for from Rennes. At length Aubin showed signs of life. Patriarche was sitting watching him at the head of the bed; Marthe at the foot, with her eyes riveted on her son's deathlike face. No one spoke. Suddenly a sound of wheels was heard.

"It is the magistrate," said the Abbe Kerdrec as he entered.

"What do you want?" asked Marthe in a terrified whisper.

"There has been an attempt at murder," was the answer, "and there must be an investigation."

Old Loic told his story, and produced the knife which he had drawn from the wound. The magistrate ascertained from Patriarche at what hour, and in whose company, and with what intention Aubin went out, and Yves was summoned. In telling what had happened, he stated that he had left his brother at the hardware shop after the knife was bought, and that he himself had gone to the tavern. The shop-keeper, however, swore that they had gone away together.

"You see," said the magistrate, "the two accounts do not agree."

Yves muttered something about his having been drinking at Macheoul's, and not remembering things clearly. Just then the doctor came in to say that Aubin had revived sufficiently to be able to speak. He was as white as the sheets in which he lay, but quite calm and collected. When all were assembled round his bed, and the magistrate had taken a chair directly opposite to him, he said:

"Sir, and you, reverend father, and you, my dearest parents, I wish to confess my crime to you. I have made an attempt on my life."

The magistrate started.

"Let me tell you how it was," continued Aubin. "The straw-cutter's daughter and I have long been betrothed, but her father will not consent to our marriage." He broke off suddenly; then, after a pause, he added faintly, "I ask pardon of you all."

The Abbé Kerdrec laid his hand on Aubin's forehead. Marthe hid her face in the bed-clothes. The magistrate rose, saying:

"After this I can say no more, except indeed, this: there are crimes which escape the justice of men, but God will judge them."

He fixed a penetrating glance, cold, clear and keen as steel, on the face of Yves, and left the house. The doctor administered a sleeping draught to his patient, and the Abbé went to say mass. Then the miserable parents commanded Yves to follow them to the inner room. There was an awful silence for some minutes; then Jean Patriarche addressed his guilty son:

"Yves, your brother has saved you, but we condemn you. Deny nothing—do not speak! You think, perhaps, that I shall shoot you, as I would a mad dog. No, for I am a Christian; but still the shedder of blood deserves death. I allow you to lose yours in an honorable calling; you must enlist to-morrow."

Yves remained silent; the old man's head was bowed lower than that of his wretched son. He pointed to the door—"Go!" he said. Yves obeyed; and then that room, the family sanctuary, which had been the scene of the home festivals and home solemnities of four generations of good and upright men, witnessed the tears and anguish of the dishonored parents. Jean spoke first.

"God's hand is heavy upon us," he said; "but it is the hand of a Father. One word from Aubin, and we must have left the country. Now, our shame and sorrow are a secret, except to ourselves. All this we owe to Aubin. Ah, Marthe, Aubin will make up for everything to us."

"And if he dies—"

"Then we must not grudge him to God."

In the course of the day the Abbé Kerdrec came to console them. His heart was filled with unutterable tenderness for Aubin, who did not appear to see anything heroic in his own conduct. The doctor gave good hopes of his recovery; he had doubted certainly, in examining the wound, whether the young man could have inflicted it on himself, but he did not mention his suspicions.

When Yves left the house, he did so like one in a dream. His hatred was gone; but a dull, heavy weight was at his heart; thought and feeling seemed alike dead in him; he was hardly conscious of anything. The meadows were covered with a white veil of mist; the sun rose higher in the heavens; the birds began to chirp and sing; all was fair and fresh and pure; and he was a blot, a stain on the loveliness of the morning. In the distance a withered tree stretched one bare arm, like a gallows, towards Saint Aubin du Cormier. He hurried on. Before him, in the dust of the road, were large brown stains.

"It is blood!" he muttered; and staggered on with a shudder.

He was wearied with his sin, without having the strength to repent. What he felt was a desire to be hidden, to be annihilated, to disappear, even if it were into the lowest hell. A low bleating struck his ear; a white goat had broken the cord which had fastened her to a tree, and was sporting near him with her kids. Yves coaxed the creature to him, fed her with some bits of bread which was in his pocket, and untied the string from her foot. There are terrible moments in which, after sinking deeper and deeper into an abyss of misery and despair, only one thing seems possible—suicide.

Yves did not reason or reflect; half unconsciously he made a running knot in the cord; he was stunned with suffering; his brother's blood was upon him. He had escaped the sentence of the law; conscience judged him, and his own hand must be his executioner. He managed to climb the tree high enough to secure the cord to the great projecting branch. Then he slowly unfastened his necktie, and hid his face one moment. A hand was laid on his shoulder.

"A man must not die before he has made his peace with God." It was the voice of the Abbé Kerdrec.

Yves fell on his knees.

"It was here, was it not? And you feel the need of expiation? I understand; and you are right—only it is not for you to choose the manner of expiation. Strike your breast, my son, and say, 'God be merciful to me, the most miserable of sinners.'"

A sob burst from the wretched Yves.

"Father, forgive me," he said "I have sinned—I must die! Aubin knows that I left him thinking him dead. My parents know the truth, and you, father, you know it too. There are voices in the air calling me Cain! This tree seemed to have tongue; and it said it was a gibbet waiting for me. The blood which stains the road cries aloud like that of Abel. God's brand is on me, it will never be effaced—a stain is on my soul which nothing can cleanse. I hated Aubin because he was good and beloved. And Armelle, how I have wronged her! I made a wicked bargain with Daniel; I bribed him to give her to me. I deserve death—a thousand deaths!"

"I condemn you to something more terrible," said the priest; "you must live!"

Yves bowed his head to the dust. It was a strange and solemn sight; the two men stood at the foot of the blasted tree, on the very spot where the crime of the day before had been committed; where a fresh one had been on the point of accomplishment. There was something awful in the silence which ensued. It seemed as if it would never end. The Abbé Kerdrec

was praying with clasped hands and uplifted eyes, in a very agony of supplication for light and grace and pardon. At length he spoke again:

"Yves, are you sorry for your sins, your hatred, your crimes?"

"I am, I am! Ask God to strike me dead here at your feet."

"Yves, you shall live; but you are not your own, your life is not your own. It belongs henceforth to every one in trouble, to every creature in danger of death. For the life which you wickedly tried to take you owe God ten lives. Wherever there is peril, by fire, by blood, or any other way, there is your place. Do you understand me? For your penance you shall save ten lives—the lives of ten—men, women or children—and by the merits of the Precious Blood of Jesus, your guilt shall be washed away, and remembered no more; neither by your earthly nor your heavenly Father."

A loud cry broke from Yves.

"Is it true," he said; "ten lives to be saved, and then for givenness from all!"

"All." The priest laid his hand on the forehead of Yves. . . . "Now rise, and go; you are reconciled with God. Complete the work of penance; obey your father, do as he bade you."

"I will; but you know father, in time of war a ball may strike me, and if I had not the number?"

"Come to me before you start and I will answer that question."

"And Armelle?"

"You must get her father to consent to her marriage with your brother."

"But the money?"

"Ask your father for it. Now go to the town, and return with your papers signed. I will go to the farm."

The young man did not speak or move for a few minutes; then he burst suddenly into an agony of weeping, and sobbed out:

"Aubin!"

"You shall see him before you go. I promise that you shall."

Yves caught the hand of the priest, kissed it passionately, and was gone in a moment.

It had been a wonderful inspiration of God that the Abbé Kerdrec had laid on Yves Patriarche the work of expiation. He felt that the same energy and force of character and passions which had driven him into such terrible guilt and misery, might, properly directed, make him by God's grace a Christian hero. It was a stroke of genius; nay, shall we rather say a supernatural illumination? It was one of those sublime ideas which so often originate with the humblest priests. The world passes such a one by, with a careless and supercilious glance at the worn face, the feeble hands, the frayed cassock; but God and all great souls know what is in him.

The Abbé Kerdrec did justice to the grand old Breton farmer in feeling sure that the money question would be no difficulty. He said simply:

"We must not expect any softening on the part of the straw-cutter. We must wait God's time. There was a marriage in contemplation to which his consent had been gained by a promise of four thousand francs. Will you buy Aubin's happiness at that price?"

And Patriarche said to Marthe:

"You have the key, wife; give the money to M. le Curé."

So the matter was settled.

Next morning the straw-cutter and his daughter were on their way to the farm. He had dressed himself with unusual care, and tried to assume the air of a careless *bonhomme*, which but ill disguised the shame which he really felt. He talked and jested with Armelle in a forced unnatural manner; but she, dear child, answered with the utmost sweetness. There was almost as much sadness as joy in her heart, but no bitterness; when God was smoothing the way before her, was it for her to remember the stones and brambles which once were there?

At the farm everything was strangely quiet. The servants

went about their work silently: Louisen had taken off her shoes for fear of disturbing her young master. Marthe never left his side; when the fever was highest, her touch soothed him; her whispered blessing, her loving kisses, always brought a smile to his pale lips. The sound of the door opening gently made her look round. Armelle entered between the priest and her father.

"Peace be to this house!" said the Curé.

Marthe folded Armelle in a silent embrace; Aubin opened his eyes, and said to Daniel.

"You won't take her away again?"

"No."

"And you will give her to me?"

"Yes."

"God is very good! Thank you, Daniel. My God, I thank thee!"

"And now," said the straw-cutter, "nobody wants me here, so I am off. You will let me know when the time comes for signing," and he left the room abruptly.

At nightfall Yves returned. Jean Patriarche had begged the Abbé Kerdrec to stay the evening. There was something so awful, so mournful, in this departure of his eldest son. It was such a terrible necessity. It almost seemed like a secret execution. Yves came in, laid some papers on the table, and stood before his father in silence. The father looked them over, went out, and returned with the Book of the Gospels, which he opened, and wrote, under the date of Yves' First Communion, "Enlisted on such a day." The conscript read the words, and then added, with a trembling hand, "Died the——." There would be only that last date to be written when the time came. He was no longer one of the family.

There was a fearful struggle in Jean's soul. He saw that there was a great change in Yves; but he did not say a word. He felt that the judge was not to be merged in the father.

Aubin had guessed what was going on by that wonderful instinct of the sick, which is like second sight. He asked Armelle to open the door, and called his brother by name. Yves started violently. The priest took his hand.

"God has forgiven you," he said; "go and be forgiven by your brother."

When he came into the sick chamber; Aubin held out his hand.

"You are going away?"

"I am a soldier"

"God bring you back safe! We will pray for you!"

Yves felt crushed; he was sinking on his knees at the foot of the bed; but Aubin held out his arms, and clasped him in a long embrace. Then, turning to Armelle, he said, "Good-bye, sister." His preparations were soon made; he tied a few things in a handkerchief; refused, with a gesture, a small bag of money which his father offered him; and with one last look at his mother, he left his home. The last scene of the family tragedy was now over.

Very slowly but steadily Aubin recovered his strength. The straw-cutter hung about the farm from time to time, to learn how he was going on. It was a regular day of rejoicing in the village when Aubin appeared for the first time in church. Père Loic had undertaken to keep Annette's grave in order; the curé had given him some flower-seeds, and it looked like a little garden. The Calvary had not been forgotten; the Patriarche family had laid fresh bouquets on the steps.

At last the wedding-day came. Never was there a happier bridegroom nor a sweeter bride. Daniel refused to be present at the ceremony; but he lingered in the churchyard, and when his daughter came out on her husband's arm, he started as if he had seen Annette; and then, turning away with a gesture of despair, he went to drown memory and remorse in wine.

CHAPTER IV.

LA TRAPPE.

Yves went straight to Rennes. Six months later, his good conduct obtained for him the permission he applied for to join the army in Italy. He distinguished himself greatly; he was something more than a gallant soldier, he was a hero. He was a model of good conduct too; and in action, wherever there was most danger, there was Yves. But there was this to be noticed in him; his most daring feats had always a touch of generosity about them. He defended rather than attacked. His one object was to save the wounded, to shelter the fallen from insult, to maintain the honor of the French flag. On one occasion, a French officer, whose courage bordered on rashness, was surrounded by Austrian soldiers. Yves dashed in, carried him off through a shower of bullets, and got him safe to the ambulance; there he fell with the wounded officer—a bullet had broken his shoulder-blade. After this he was promoted. The first time he was allowed to use his hand, he wrote the word "one" on a sheet of paper, and sent it to the Abbé Kerdrec. Another time he saved two children from drowning, at the risk of his life. He shunned all notice after these actions, as though they were crimes; and his superior officers used to say, "Yves Patriarche is a regular hero, but there never was such a bear of a fellow. After all, there is nothing like a Breton; with a few regiments of such men we should conquer half the world."

At the end of the campaign Yves was *sous officier*. He refused his discharge; danger was his passion, and he volunteered for the Chinese expedition. There too his bravery was the theme on many tongues, and his name was more than once mentioned in the dispatches. He had particularly requested the Abbé Kerdrec not to write to him; he was resolved to bear his punishment to the full; the bitter cup should be sweetened by no hand but God's.

The chaplain of the regiment had formed a strong attachment to the brusque, reserved soldier, whose silent ways he had watched; he was interested in the man who fought like a lion, made no intimacies, and whose only passion appeared to be that of helping and saving others. French, English, Chinese—it was all the same to Yves; one life was as good as another, there were seven owing still.

On the field, in the trenches, anywhere and everywhere, he fought hand to hand with Death to rob him of his victims. He bore a charmed life; often he escaped all hurt by a miracle; at others his injuries healed with an ease and rapidity which astonished the surgeon, who would write him a prescription or dress his wound with a smile and a shrug, intended to convey that the man was sure to get around, and no thanks to him.

Alas, poor Yves! No wonder that his self-devotion was so absolute; it was his only relief from the anguish of memory. When the time of action was over, the ghost of the miserable past filled his tent. The pale face of Aubin on the road in the moonlight rose up before him; the voices of the betrothed lovers again struck his ears as on the day when he heard them behind the hawthorn hedges—the day on the evening of which he destroyed their happiness. Once more the scene changed; this time it was the wretched hovel of the straw-cutter; and he saw Armelle dressed in mean and ragged clothes, with her besotted father and the degraded woman he had put in her mother's place, yet unsullied by the unfit companionship, as a lily blooming on a dunghill loses nothing of its fragrance and its purity. Oaths, bad language, ill-usage—nothing could really harm her. Her duty remained, and she bent meekly beneath that glorious yoke, as only the virtuous and holy do. But the misery she had endured was his doing; he it was who had driven her from the happy home where she was beloved and honored, to be the insulted victim of La Gervaise. It was too much. Had not the Abbé Kerdrec deceived him when he assured him of forgiveness in the name of God? Were not his crimes past all pardon? And as the gibbet-like tree rose before his imagination, he seemed to himself like Judas, when

rushing in his hopeless remorse from the assembly of the priests he came upon the executioner fashioning the cross.

And all this misery was aggravated by the respect of his superior officers, by the affection of the chaplain.

"What am I," he cried, in the bitterness of his soul, "but an assassin and a thief? If they knew the truth, they would scorn and hate me—they would shun me as one stricken with the plague—they would point at me as a monster of wickedness. The general would tear the cross from my button-hole. Praise, respect, affection—it is all stolen. I will wear this hideous mask of hypocrisy no longer."

One day the chaplain, the Abbé Florent, found him sitting alone in the tent. He had a book in his hand, but he was not reading; his lips moved as though he were repeating something he had learned by heart.

"My friend," said the priest, gently.

"I do not deserve to have a friend," answered Yves.

"Yet you greatly need one."

"I do, and I do not."

"Explain yourself, Yves."

"A friend—a real friend—should be our second self."

"Quite true."

"And we should have no secrets from him."

"Not when it is possible."

"It *must* be possible," said the soldier, gloomily.

"Not always, Yves. When the wound is scarred—"

"And if it is a shameful one?"

"No matter, if God has healed it."

"A friend!" Yves burst out passionately. "I have none; I never shall have one—it is impossible. My comrades like me, they are good fellows; but do I make friends with them? Is there any confidence between us? At the canteen, by the bivouac fire, I keep aloof. Alone—always alone. You will say that is my fault, my choice. Yes, father, because it must be so. I have one thing to do—a task which is laid upon me—and I devote myself to it. But that is not enough for me. There are many sorts of expiation; I must go through them all."

"My poor fellow!" said the priest, gently.

"Do you know what I was reading when you came in. It was the Bible. Shall I go on reading aloud?"

"Go on," said the Chaplain.

Yves began, and as he read drops of agony beaded his forehead.

"Cain said to his brother, Let us go forth abroad. And when they were in the field Cain rose up against his brother Abel, and slew him.

"And the Lord said unto Cain, Where is thy brother Abel? And he answered, I know not; am I my brother's keeper?"

"And he said to him, What hast thou done? The voice of thy brother's blood crieth to Me from the earth.

"Now, therefore, cursed shalt thou be upon the earth, which hath opened her mouth and received the blood of thy brother at thy hand.

"When thou shalt till it, it shall not yield to thee its fruit; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be upon the earth.

"And Cain said to the Lord, My iniquity is greater than that I may deserve pardon.

"Behold, thou dost cast me out this day from the face of the earth, and I shall be hidden from Thy face, and I shall be a vagabond and a fugitive on the earth; everyone, therefore, that findeth me shall kill me.

"And the Lord said to him, No, it shall not be so; but whosoever shall kill Cain shall be punished seven-fold. And the Lord set a mark upon Cain."

Yves read these verses slowly, in a low, stifled voice, and when he had done so he put down the book, told his own history to the priest, and then, looking into his face, exclaimed:

"Now you know why I cannot die. I attempted the life of my brother, and God has set a mark upon me, and Death will not strike me. Now you see why I can never have a friend. You thought well of me, father, but I have been a bad son, an unnatural brother; even as a child I was bad. Will you not

On a certain day, father, our curé told me to save ten lives; and he promised me God's forgiveness. And that is my work. But I begin to think my burden is too heavy for me. Death—death—that is all I long for."

The Abbé Florent clasped him in his arms. "My friend, my brother!" he said.

"Your friend—your brother—after what I have told you?"

"Yves," continued the chaplain, "you must let me read your inmost soul now. I can heal all its wounds."

He shook his head.

"You think that is impossible?"

"I am sure it is."

"Tell me, Yves, what do you want? what is in your mind?"

"It is not the present, but the future, that I am thinking of."

"And what do you wish to do in the future?"

"To lead a life of silence, solitude, and prayer. To live with good and holy men, who would know my history, and yet let me be with them. To be the lowest of all, the servant of all, and to feel that God has forgiven me. To drink the chalice of humiliation to the very dregs, and to satisfy the justice, the implacable justice of God."

"A merciful justice, Yves; do not forget that."

"Yesterday," he went on, "I was so happy as to save three little children, whom the Sisters of Charity have received. That makes eight lives saved in five years; the number will soon be made up, please God, and then—what shall I do?"

"First go back to your home."

"Go back! I!"

"For a time. First of all, go to your good curé, and tell him that your penance is accomplished; then go to your father's farm."

"Go there and see them again!—all of them!" murmured the soldier.

"Yes, all. Your parents, to get their forgiveness; Aubin—that good Aubin—to make him happy."

"And Armelle—"

"To see her your brother's happy wife."

"True; that is part of the penance."

"And then—"

"Yes, then—"

"Then you shall leave Saint Aubin du Cormier, and go to Morbihan. Go to the Abbey of Thymadeuc, and ask to see the Abbot of La Trappe. Tell him everything; speak to him as openly as you have spoken to me, and ask to be received as a brother. You will be able to make a confession of your whole life before them all, and to realize the longing you have just expressed—that of living with holy men acquainted with your sad history."

"You are saving me!" exclaimed Yves.

"I have shown you a safe harbor, but one which is not without its labors and storms. There will be every kind of hard penance—everything to subject the flesh to the spirit: absolute silence, trying fasts, wearisome watchings. There will be everything to tear the heart from earth and fix it on heaven; everything to confound human wisdom, to exalt the soul by humbling it, and to purchase eternal happiness at the price of daily martyrdom. That will be your life, and it is a hard one."

"The innocent and good accept it. Shall I complain?"

From that day Yves was a different man. The future, which had been so terrible because it was vague and undefined, lay before him now in a tangible shape. His thoughts dwelt on that severe life of labor and penance with love and longing. To live by daily dying—that was the life for him.

The army returned to France, and Yves got his discharge. Tears were in his eyes when he took leave of the Abbé Florent, promising to write to him. Then he started for St. Aubin du Cormier. Two comrades were with him, who belonged to neighboring villages: Yves was *décoré*, and wore a medal for each of his glorious campaigns.

When the three soldiers reached Rennes it was night, but Yves was anxious to go on; and as his friends would not leave

Suddenly, heavy dark masses swept across the sky, then lurid red ones. "It is a fire," said one of the men. They set off running in the direction of the flames, crossing fields, leaping hedges and ditches. As they approached they could distinguish the burning buildings, the crackling of the flames, and the fall of the masses of wood.

The fire had begun in the barn, and the terrified inmates were surprised in their sleep.

"Come on, my lads!" cried Yves; "it is not worse than the fire of a battery. Follow me heroes of Pekin and the Tchernaïa!"

Just as they dashed into the burning house, people were talking of a helpless old man, who slept in a shed adjoining a pigeon house, which gave admission to the fire through numerous openings, and of some one who had climbed on the roof to get to the old man, and been seen no more. No one knew who he was, but all said he was a gallant fellow, and that no doubt he would lose his life in his generous attempt.

It was a strange and horrible confusion; the lamentations of the poor people whose property was being destroyed, the wailing of children, the sound of axes, the creaking of the bucket-chain as water was drawn from the well, mingling with the shouts of the workmen and the vociferations of the crowd.

Yves had climbed up to the pigeon house, and gone in. On the threshold, close to the staircase, which the flames had all but reached, lay two bodies—two corpses, doubtless—suffocated by the smoke.

Yves lifted up one—the eldest—seized the other by the hand, and so, laden with this double burden, carrying one, dragging the other, he struggled, panting up the quivering staircase, blinded by the smoke, enveloped in flames, and feeling as though he were drinking draughts of fire. At the top, he sank down with his burden, faintly murmuring, "Ten!"

The three men—none could tell whether they were living or dead—were carried, senseless, burnt and blackened, to a place of safety; women threw water on their faces, and tried to revive them.

The Abbé Kerdrec approached the group. The old man remained insensible; the man who had been the first to hasten to his rescue was slowly recovering.

"Aubin, my son!" cried the priest.

The young man tried to rise.

"Armelle! Tell Armelle and the children."

"We have sent for her; and the poor old man is beginning to come to at last."

"Oh, thank God! My head swam, and I made sure of death. How was it? Who saved me?"

"Our comrade," said the two soldiers, who had joined the party. "It is the way with this fellow, wherever he goes."

The Abbé Kerdrec bent over the *sous-officier*. He had not at first recognized the blackened disfigured face, but at the words of the soldiers a thought flashed into his mind.

"Can it be possible?" he said; and he put back the tangled hair from his forehead, and looked long and earnestly at him. Then he turned to Aubin, and said in a faltering voice: "My son, do you know who it is that has saved your life? It is Yves—your brother."

Aubin jumped up and threw his arms round the fainting soldier. "Yes—my brother! Yes, he lives; his heart beats. And look, father, the cross of honor! Yves—dear Yves—my own brother! don't you know us, Aubin and M. le Curé? O, to think of our mother's happiness!"

Yves could not take it all in yet; but he felt himself embraced by strong and loving arms; he heard voices that were music in his ears; and he closed his eyes, wondering if it was all a dream—the danger, the pain, and the gladness.

Presently he regained full consciousness. Day was breaking, and he looked around, first at one, and then at another. When he saw the curé, he caught both his hands, exclaiming, "Ten, father, ten!"

"And do you know who the tenth is, my son?"

"No there was an old man, and a strong young one, half-suffocated, I think. No, I don't know their names; I don't even know where I am; but that is no matter. Ten, at last, and God is satisfied!"

"And do you still doubt His forgiveness?"

"I must believe in it."

"Yes, Yves, you must, for here is the proof, and the pledge of pardon. My son, here is the man you have just saved."

Then Yves knew he had saved his brother's life.

It was a moment not to be described. The brothers held each other in a long embrace, weeping, trembling, murmuring broken words of love and tenderness which cannot be written down, but which the heart easily understands. Then Aubin took his brother home; the curé followed with the two soldiers. You may imagine how he drank in their accounts of the heroic actions of their comrade. Never had the good Abbé Kerdrec thanked God as he did that day.

They were in sight of the farm now. The men were about their work. Armelle stood at the door, with a child in her arms, and another at her side. She was looking anxiously down the road: the group had just reached the turning. She ran on. Aubin met her, and took her hand—"Armelle, you are the first to welcome our dear brother Yves, who has just saved my life." Then there were the children to be looked at; and after a few minutes they all went towards the farm. Yves trembled as the meeting with his father drew near. The old man came forward. Without hesitating, Armelle went up to him, saying, as she put her arms round his neck: "It is Yves, father; he has saved Aubin; we owe him everything." Then all turned away with a feeling of awe, as the father embraced his repentant son. We will not attempt to describe that moment, still less the mother's feelings. The excitement at the farm, in the village may be imagined. Every one was pressed to eat, but no one was hungry, except the two soldiers, who had certainly a good appetite. Poor old Louison limped about, waiting on every one. Old Loïc hastened up to see the hero of the village, and one after another followed him, full of pride and delight, till every one had had a good look at him; and I should be afraid to say how many times the soldiers had to tell their comrade's history.

It was all positive torture to Yves; but he bore it for his father's sake; and besides, it would be over soon. God had been very good, and the goal was very nearly reached.

The following Sunday, after Vespers, he asked for a private interview with his father, and the old man went with him into the inner room. He opened the Book of the Gospels, and showed his son where, in a few simple words, the story of the fire was told. Then Yves knelt down; he insisted on speaking to his father in that attitude. They talked long and earnestly. More than once Jean Patriarche hid his tears on his son's shoulders; more than once the young man's voice was broken by emotion. Then the peace of God sank into their hearts, and there was a great calm as Jean solemnly blessed Yves.

The next morning, the farmer dressed for a journey, was waiting, surrounded by his family, while Yves received his mother's parting kisses. Aubin was making a last appeal.

"Why should you leave us?" he said. Could you not make yourself happy here amongst us all? Why must you grieve me and break our mother's heart? Is not this your proper place—your home? Where are you going?"

And his father answered: "I am going to take your brother to Thymadene to the abbey of La Trappe!"

Then Aubin made the sign of the cross, and said no more. The last embraces were given in silence; there was a sense of God's presence in the house; and Patriarche and his son went out slowly and silently. Yves turned round just once to kiss his hand to Marthe, and then the only sounds were the heavy steps of Jean Patriarche, the sobs of Marthe, and the tender voice of Armelle trying to comfort her.

The Five Franc Piece.

I.

TOWARDS the end of the month of December, 1849, a young soldier, with that frank and honest mien one so much loves to meet with, presented himself at the military post-office in the street of the Corso at Rome, to exchange a modest five franc piece for an order of the same value.

"To whom do you wish to send this little order?" asked M. Lambelin, an excellent man, who then filled the office of post-master as well as pay-master to the army.

"To my old mother," replied the young man.

"For her new year's gift, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir."

"That is right, comrade, a new year's gift from a good son, brings happiness to him who gives, as well as to her who receives it. What is your name?"

"Bois."

"Of what regiment?"

"The 25th, 5th division."

"From what country, are you?"

"From the department of Cher."

"Where does your mother live?"

"At Communs, near Aubigny."

"Your name is not unknown to me, for, if I mistake not, you have before this, brought me the fruits of your little savings?"

"Little, you may well call them, sir, for it takes some time for a poor trooper to save a five franc piece from a pay of five centimes a day."

"This saving seems to me impossible."

"Nothing more true, sir, nevertheless. I have already had the happiness to send my poor mother a sum of seventy francs."

"Seventy francs? In what time?"

"In two years, during which I have had the honor of serving my country."

"Your calculation seems to me incorrect, for a sou put by each day, would only produce, at the end of two years, thirty-six francs fifty centimes; how then do you come by the difference? And how have you been able to bring me so often these sums, out of your ordinary pay?"

"Nothing is easier, sir; I have done what I do now every time an opportunity offers. In the day, I mount guard or do some service for comrades richer than myself; at night, I mend their trousers, shirts or gaiters."

"In this manner then you unite the duties of a soldier and the profession of a tailor?"

"This employment brings me every day a few centimes, which I carefully hoard up until I can change them into a round piece like this."

"You never go then to the tavern?"

"Never."

"Then you don't like wine?"

"I like my mother better."

"But some recreation is necessary now and then in the laborious life of a soldier."

"And I am far from depriving myself of it."

"Where do you take it?"

"That is as it happens. One day, perhaps, at Saint Louis, the parish of the French in Rome, where the worthy priests tell us all sorts of things about the country we are now living in. On another day, I go to the Trinité-du-Mont, where the good religious make us sing hymns, which reminds me of my own village church. Then sometimes to the Catacombs, or to the Forum, where a bishop, Monseigneur Lucquet, who calls us his children, relates to us curious histories of past times.

It appears, sir, that the ancient Romans were famous troopers in their day, as they say of the French in our times. These amusements are better than those of the tavern."

"That is quite true, comrade, your conduct is worthy of all praise."

"Praise for doing what is right! oh no; but now, sir, will you allow me to take leave of you, for duty calls me to my quarters. Adieu, sir."

"Adieu, my friend."

II.

Whilst this conversation was going on at the military post-office, the frequenters of the table-d'hôte of the hotel Minerva, the best hotel in Rome, kept by M. Save, the best host in the world, remarked the prolonged absence of the pay-master, who was generally noted for his punctuality.

"Lambelin is quite a *lambin** this morning," said the colonel, in a forced tone, which contrasted with the burst of laughter occasioned by his bad joke.

"No doubt he has received to-night a wagon load of French coin," answered Robin, since dead at Versailles.

"Lambelin's chest is the very *Pactolus* of the army," added Lacauchie.

"A famous torrent, indeed, that!" said another colonel, now a general of brigade, "it is a pity it is so often dry, and that we cannot dip our fingers in when we like."

From one end of the table to the other there was kept up a running fire of bon-mots, repartees, and jokes, seasoned by that gaiety which a French party knows so well how to keep up; till at last Lambelin entered the room, his arrival being greeted by a burst of applause.

"What news do you bring?" was shouted out.

"I will tell you at dessert, it will make you relish your coffee better," answered Lambelin. And at dessert the pay-master told the story of the soldier Bois, relating what the reader has just heard.

"The conduct of this soldier is as beautiful as it is rare;" said a superior officer, the president of the party; "I will make enquiry as to Bois' behavior since he has been in the army, and if it answers to the good opinion we already have of him, we will come to his aid and do something for his old mother." This suggestion was received with enthusiasm.

The report of virtuous actions, though not spreading so quickly as that of scandalous ones, nevertheless gets abroad sometimes pretty soon. The history of the soldier Bois had already arrived at the Café Neuf, where after breakfasting at the hotel Minerva, it was the custom to take a cup of mocha. About twenty officers were playing billiards in the gardens of the establishment, for the benefit of the hero of the morning. The Café Nuovo had just changed its name for the Café Militaire. Those of you my readers who are ignorant of the cause of this transformation will no doubt like to know it.

In the early days of the French occupation, two officers presented themselves at the Café Neuf, then one of the greatest resorts of the Italian demagogues. It was there, during three months, that plots were formed against the authority of that holy Pontiff, who had inaugurated his reign, by the merciful act of general amnesty. The democratic Romans, who continued from custom to frequent this establishment, now become a place of re-union for the French officers, received the two visitors in silence, but at the same time with unequivocal signs of antipathy. The landlord of the café, advancing towards our two countrymen, thus addressed them.

"What do you desire?"

* Lambin—a dawdle.

"Two cups of coffee, if you please," was the answer.

"We have none left."

"Well then, give us two cups of chocolate."

"We never make any."

"Give us then a bowl of punch."

"As to punch, we have only the English journal of that name."

"Bring it then," said one of the officers, beginning to comprehend the hostile intentions of the host.

"Some one is reading it," he answered.

"Have you any ices?"

"Very fine ones, you can see yourselves in them from head to foot." *

"Have you any beer?"

"We finished it this morning."

"Well! then! bring us a glass of water; you surely have that!"

"Not at all, the French have broken the aqueduct which supplied it."

"Enough!" And the officers, with difficulty restraining their anger, took their departure.

The frequenters of the *Café Neuf*, laughed heartily, and congratulated the master of the establishment on his courage, when bye-and-bye a confused noise of footsteps, bayonets, etc., was heard on the stairs. At the same moment a company of grenadiers appeared, and ranged themselves in order of battle. One of the officers who commanded the troop, approached the frightened hotel keeper, and said to him in a determined tone—

"There is no coffee to be had in your shop; you have no chocolate, no ices, no beer; you refuse even water to your customers; your house then is not fit for a coffee-house, it will do better service when we have transformed it into a barrack."

The *Café Neuf* was immediately evacuated and shut up; but at the end of a month the master made an humble apology to the French authorities, who allowed him permission to open his establishment on his agreeing to change the name as above mentioned. Let us now return to Bois.

III.

On the same day, as he had promised, the colonel made inquiries about the soldier Bois. The result was most satisfactory; ever since he had been in the regiment, he had not had a single punishment, and he was remarked during the siege for his courage and coolness in danger. As good a son as he was a brave soldier, he deprived himself even of his pipe, the consolation of a trooper, in order to make up more quickly the modest piece of five francs, which he was accustomed to send to his old mother. This conduct of Bois was not only worthy of praise, but it merited a recompense, which was awarded him some days after as we shall see, in the hotel *Minerva*.

It was determined to invite this good son and brave soldier to dinner, and it fell to me to perform the commission, which I did, without betraying the quality or the number of persons he was to meet. I have already mentioned that the hotel *Minerva* received at its table the élite of the French army, so you can imagine my dear reader, what was the surprise and embarrassment of this poor soldier, on finding himself seated at a splendidly served table, by the side of colonels and officers in full uniform. He would have drawn back, but for the kind commands of his superiors.

"I wish much to retire," he said, whispering in my ear, and twisting in his fingers the napkin to which he was unaccustomed.

"Remain, my friend," said I, "you will dine like a prince."

"I should like the mess with my comrades much better."

* *Glaces*, the French both for ice and glass.

"You will not say so by the time we have come to the desert."

"Dessert! what is that?"

"You will see, comrade; meantime, taste this wine."

Bois ate and drank with extreme discretion, scarcely daring to raise his eyes more than three inches from his plate; however, encouraged by the kind looks, and unanimous welcome of the officers, he at last became more at his ease. He was beginning to confess that the cookery of the hotel *Minerva*, was better than that of the canteen, when a servant brought me a box, directed "to *M. Bois, chasseur au 25^e léger 5^e, du second*." I handed it to its owner, who begged me to open it. It contained a pair of red woollen epaulettes, a little card box carefully sealed, and a letter addressed to Bois. He gave it to me to read and inform him of its contents. It was as follows, "A good action ought to be recompensed! you have been a good son and good soldier; this is for the soldier." We put on him the epaulettes of a carabinier. "You have been a good son, this is for your mother." The little card box contained a sum of one hundred francs, quite a fortune for him, who during two years, and by the most generous sacrifices had only been able to realize, son by son, the sum of seventy francs.

The joy of the young soldier can be better imagined than expressed. The name of God and his mother trembled on his lips, and his heart overflowed with grateful emotion. "How good art Thou, my God!" said he, "Thou hast had pity on my poor mother! Placed above want, this dear parent, will now have wood in the winter to warm her limbs, frozen by old age, and bread at all times, bread not too hard or too black; thanks, thanks, O my God." And then turning his eyes to us, he said, "Oh! how good you are also, my dear benefactors, for I see that the Lord God has chosen you to enrich my mother! Accept my warmest gratitude!"

At this moment, the brave Colonel Devaux raising his glass full of champagne, cried out, "Messieurs, I propose a toast! let us drink to the health of the woman who gave birth to this true model of filial piety! To the mother of Bois, Messieurs!"

"Bravo! colonel," answered the voices in chorus, and cups were filled and emptied to the health of the mother and her son.

Notwithstanding all these flattering speeches, of which he was the object, and the entreaties of his companions, Bois drank as he had eaten with extreme moderation, scarcely touching with his lips the sparkling draught.

"What! my friend, do you despise that liquid there?" said the surgeon of the army, the excellent and wise Lacauchie, since dead, a victim to his love of science.

"Like you all, monsieur, it possesses my esteem, my respect."

"Well! prove it then."

"I would do so, but I have something here," answered Bois pointing to his heart, "I have something here, which chokes me."

"A good reason why you should drink then. Now, one, two, three, let us drink again to the health of your mother. Drink; bravo! one more cup."

"Enough: this is the best stuff I ever drank in my life, but it intoxicates, and I am too happy to-day, to run the risk of making acquaintance with the police."

"Happiness cheers," answered the colonel, "but will not intoxicate. Therefore, before separating, messieurs, let us drink to the health of our common mother, to France!"

"To France!"

An instant after, Bois experiencing in himself the truth of the axiom enounced by Lacauchie, regained his quarters, to enjoy his bliss alone, and to think of his mother.

The other personages in this scene, adjourned to the *Café Français*, to end a day, of which they could with truth say with Titus, "We have gained one more."

THE PORTRAIT IN MY UNCLE'S DINING-ROOM.

A TALE OF FRENCH SOCIETY UNDER THE OLD REGIME.

Translated from the French of Madame Charles Reybaud by Lady Georgiana Fullerton.

CHAPTER I.

DOM GERUSAC AND HIS COUNTRY HOUSE.

DURING my college life, or rather more than thirty years ago, I used to spend a part of my holidays with an uncle of my mother's at a pretty country house in Upper Provence, a few leagues from the Piedmontese frontier. This uncle of mine was a Benedictine, wonderfully learned, and devoted to his books. It was generally agreed that he would have been one of the glories of the celebrated Congregation of St. Maur, if the Revolution had not driven him from his monastery just as he had completed his novitiate.

Dom Gêrusac, as he was still called in his family, was only twenty-five years old when the decree was issued which suppressed all the religious communities in France. He did not take advantage of this circumstance to mix with the world again, nor did he, on the other hand, endeavor to return to the religious life by retaining, like most of the members of his Order, the habit of St. Benedict in a Spanish or Italian monastery. When the storm of the Revolution had in some measure subsided, he collected together the remains of his paternal inheritance, and took refuge in a little obscure corner of the earth, to which he gave the high-sounding name of St. Pierre de Corbie, in remembrance of the famous House where the first studious years of his youth had been spent. This little property was concealed, as it were, in a bend of the Alps, on the northern slope of the chain of mountains which gradually descends to the mouth of the Var. It was a wild but yet cheerful site. The house stood on a little eminence, behind which rose a ridge of immense rocks, on the steep sides of which grew some fine tufts of Spanish chestnuts, whilst its deep crevices were filled with a multitude of shrubs. The approach to it was by a winding road, bordered with willows and poplars, forming on both sides a transparent curtain of foliage, through which could be seen fields, olive-groves and long trellised alleys of vines, which looked like green ribbons of curious hues unrolled on the chalky soil.

The diligence used to set me down on the high-road at about a good league's distance from my uncle's home, and I then followed on foot the narrow lane into which no *voiturier*, or coachman, had ever hazarded his vehicle. I was delighted to make my way along this unfrequented path, carrying my slender stock of clothes tied in a handkerchief, and with a travelling stick in my hand, as if I had been a workman on his tour through France.

I hastened my steps as I drew nearer, until at last, at the entrance of the avenue, coming to a stand-still, I looked around me with a delight I can hardly describe, for each stony bank, each tree, each little rivulet making its way through the thick grass, seemed like an old friend. It was always the same

peaceful, charming, well-known picture. The house with its white walls and red-tiled roof, over which a wreath of blue smoke curled gracefully upward, then a little below the house the garden, green and gay as in the spring, and close to it the orchard, with its fruit-trees bending beneath their load of red apples and violet colored plums. And beyond this fair home-scene rose the beautiful mountains, crowned with forests of oak, and their sides dotted with white sheep, the sounds of whose bleating was faintly heard in the distance.

My good old uncle always met me with open arms, his first question invariably was, "My dear boy, do you come loaded with University honors?" And when I informed him of my successes, he never failed to congratulate me in a Latin speech. After which he would notice my heated, tired appearance, and hurrying me into the little sitting-room on the ground floor, he called his old servant, Marian, and desired her to bring me a glass of sugared wine, and to take my bundle up stairs.

The sight of Marian was the only drawback to my enjoyment in arriving in this lovely place. She was certainly the ugliest creature I ever set my eyes on. There was something grim, sulky, and disagreeable about her looks, which I can hardly describe, but that made her singularly repulsive. I could never get over my aversion to this woman. When I was a little fellow of eight or nine years old, I did not venture to look Marian in the face, and later on I could never see her without thinking of the characters in the infernal legends. Her stiff figure, bony hands, blood-shot eyes, and innumerable wrinkles, always reminded me of the stories about vampires and ghouls. But I am bound to add that she was an excellent servant, attentive, obedient, and so little given to talking that she never seemed of her own accord to open her lips.

My uncle had furnished his rooms with the becoming simplicity and substantial comfort of some of the ancient Religious Houses. Marian excepted, everything about him had a cheerful, pleasant aspect. The little saloon where he habitually sat was furnished in particular with an unpretending elegance which did not at first strike the eye, but by degrees its peculiar character attracted notice. Everything in it was adapted for a quiet, peaceful, studious mode of life. Comfortable armchairs, noiselessly rolling on the castors, seemed to gather of their own accord round the chimney, where, as early as September, a bright little fire of vine fagots was lighted in the evening. Vases of Japan china, always filled with fresh flowers, decorated the corners of the room, and each frame of the gray wainscoted walls was enlivened by a landscape painting of some historical scene. A door, which was generally ajar, opened into the library, the shelves of which were enriched with all the bibliographic treasures my uncle had collected. There, in fair array, were to be seen a profane tribe of Latin authors, the learned host of the Benedictines of St. Maur, and a crowd of

less illustrious writers, who have devoted their time to the study of our national records. A few wandering poets had strayed into the midst of these huge folios, and their gorgeous bindings glittered here and there on the dusky shelves. The saloon was adorned with several paintings, and a curious old set of engravings, much prized by my uncle. On the walnut-wood sideboard stood some ancient pieces of plate of exquisite workmanship. But I must own that none of these curiosities attracted me half as much as a portrait which Dom Gêrusac had hung up over the pier-glass of the chimney-piece. It was a drawing in colored pencils, faded by time, and set in a frame, once a handsome one, but now damaged in several places. This picture represented a woman in the full bloom of the most radiant youth and beauty, and dressed in the style of one of Watteau's shepherdesses—a trimming of pink ribbons ornamented the long, stiff, painted bodice which supported her round and slender waist. Two broad black velvet bands, worn like bracelets, encircled her beautiful arms, which were bare up to the elbow, and her powdered hair was tied up with bows of a pale blue. There was something wonderfully captivating about that face—a mixture of softness and brilliancy in those tender and slightly prominent blue eyes. A half smile seemed to hover over lips which disclosed teeth of the purest enamel; that little mouth was like a pomegranate flower, into whose chalice jasmine blossoms had fallen.

My place at the table was just opposite the chimney, and I could not raise my eyes without seeing this enchanting creature, who seemed to gaze on me with the most bewitching sweetness; but when I looked down and saw Marian, with her crabbed hideous face, standing bolt-upright behind Dom Gêrusac's arm chair, ready to change our plates and wait upon us, I could not get over this contrast, and it served to increase my antipathy to the old woman. I might have been more easily reconciled to her repulsive ugliness, if I had not had so often before my eyes the ideal beauty of that incomparable face. As to my uncle, he looked upon most things with the indifference of a saint and of a scholar. I am sure it had never occurred to him to take notice of Marian's appearance. I ventured to ask him one day if he ever remembered her less wrinkled and shrivelled than she then was. He thought a little, and then said, "No, upon my word I don't. Do you think she is very old? I suppose she must be about my own age—sixty or thereabouts."

And, when I exclaimed at this, he added, "I should not be surprised if she were younger. There are people who appear old long before their time. It strikes me that for the last ten years that she has been in my service she has always looked much as she does now. At any rate, she is as strong and active as a young girl."

Dom Gêrusac lived quite secluded from the world, and kept up little correspondence, except with the learned societies to which he forwarded the results of his labors, and received at his house only a few members of his family who from time to time came to see him. A good old priest, the Abbé Lambert, was the only habitual visitor at St. Pierre de Corbie. Once a week during the holidays I used to see him arrive, with his worn-out cassock tucked up in his pockets, his Breviary, under his arm, and a thick stick in his hand. He was curé of the parish of Malpeire, on the confines of which my uncle's property was situated, and I would venture to affirm that this worthy man was the poorest priest in France. His parishioners were scattered over a vast tract of thickly-wooded land, intersected by deep valleys and often impassable torrents. The village of Malpeire, situated nearly in the centre of the parish, contained scarcely more than a hundred inhabitants, but from the size of the surrounding walls, and the number of houses crumbling into ruins, it was easy to see that its population must have formerly been far more considerable. The church, which, with its Gothic spire, still towered over all the neighboring country, was a vast building, bearing traces of ancient splendor; magnificent stained-glass windows adorned the chancel, and mutilated pieces of sculpture and pictures denoted the places where works of art had once existed.

The village of Malpeire was about a league distant from St. Pierre, on the other side of a high mountain, which we crossed every Sunday on our way to mass, for although Dom Gêrusac had long since given up the observances of monastic life, he practised all the ordinary duties of a Christian. As often happens in these Alpine countries, we on the southern slope of the mountain enjoyed an equable temperature, whereas frequent storms burst upon the higher lands, and the cold was sensibly felt in that part of the parish. We accordingly took precautionary measures before ascending to those regions. Marian went on before us, carrying our cloaks, and waited for us at the entrance of a gorge which divided the summit of the mountain, and across which a current of icy air was almost always blowing.

The old servant carried also in a basket our breakfast, and in a wallet slung over her shoulder my uncle's offerings for the poor. She insisted on conveying these things in this way, instead of strapping them on the back of the quiet little donkey Dom Gêrusac rode. We generally made a halt on reaching the above mentioned gorge. The spot went by the name of the pass of Malpeire. It had a wild, sombre aspect, which particularly took my fancy. The rock, apparently cleft by antediluvian convulsion, exhibited a rent, both sides of which were almost perpendicular. The black jagged points of its double crest rose overhead in sharp and clear outline against the pale blue sky, and the bottom of the precipice was hidden by a multitude of plants and shrubs, which under their intricate tissue, concealed unfathomed abysses. The pathway ran between the bare rock on one side and these masses of verdure on the other. Beneath the green surface roared the rapid waters of a brawling torrent. This road became impracticable in winter, when the snow concealed the inequalities of the ground, but in summer nothing could be pleasanter than to walk in the shade of those huge rocks, enjoying the delicious coolness rising from that ocean of foliage alongside the narrow pathway. An immense mass of rocks stood at the entrance of this defile, and jutted like a promontory above the wild uneven tract of land on the northern side of the mountain. On the summit of this sort of crest, the steep and barren sides of which overshadowed the village, rose the dilapidated walls and ruined towers of the castle of Malpeire.

When we reached the mouth of the gorge, Marian rose from the seat at the foot of the road where she was in the habit of waiting for us, and came forward to assist Dom Gêrusac to dismount; then producing our cloaks, she threw them over our shoulders, and forthwith proceeded on her way, leading the donkey by the bridle.

"Really," my uncle would say, as he followed her with his eyes, "that good woman has the legs of an ostrich, which runs, they say, at the rate of seven leagues an hour. There, see, she is already out of sight."

"So much the better," I mentally exclaimed, for to my mind Marian disfigured the prospect. I hated the sight of this antiquated shepherdess in her Sunday clothes, with her heavy shoes, her frightful black-straw hat cocked up on her old gray top-knot, and her loose print gown, with the sleeves cut short at the elbow, leaving her bare arms exposed to view.

When she had disappeared, I walked more leisurely along the little winding path, enjoying the wild beauty of that magnificent scenery. Each time I came there I felt more struck with the picture which met my eyes at the furthest extremity of the defile. The ruins of the ancient feudal castle frowned above us, and at the foot of the gigantic rocks on which they rested stood the old church, with the houses of the village irregularly grouped around it. In the midst of a large open space in front of the sacred edifice were two elm trees, linked together by their interweaving branches, so as to form in appearance a single tree with two large trunks. They had not their equal for size and beauty in the whole country. Beyond the hamlet an extensive tract of undulating ground was spread out, over which the eye wandered without taking cognizance of any particular details. It would almost have seemed as if, in some strange convulsion of nature, the land had been thrown

about in wild heaving confusion, and then suddenly resolved itself into a sea of mountains, an ocean of motionless waves.

The ruins which overlooked this rugged expanse formed an imposing pile of buildings, displaying the architectural features of several different epochs. Dom Gêrusac had taken care to point out to me the different characteristics of those successive eras. According to him, Roman legions had once encamped on the broad terrace in front of the castle. The encircling walls dated from feudal times, whereas the elaborate ornaments still to be seen on the frontage of two elegant pavilions on each side of the building betokened a comparatively modern erection. In any case, nothing could be more desolate than the aspect of these roofless dilapidated structures. I had sometimes questioned my uncle as to the former lords of the domain of Malpeire, but he had never studied the local traditions of the place, and the sort of answer my inquiries generally met with was that the history of these great families was a perfect chaos. Not, indeed, that documents on the subject were altogether wanting; there were some valuable ones in the cartulary of the church of St. Maur, which he happened himself to possess. He had come across a title in that book which went clearly to prove that Ferrand, seventeenth baron of Malpeire, was one of the sixteen Provengal lords who accompanied Godfrey de Bouillon to the Holy Land. He intended some day to write a memoir on the subject, and he would give it to me to read. But, whilst the chronicle of the crusader was progressing, I made in the meanwhile an effort to induce Marian to relate to me the more recent history of the country. One day as we were going to Malpeire, I overtook her at the entrance of the pass, and, instead of getting out of her way, as I usually contrived to do, I boldly made an attempt at conversation.

"What a beautiful morning it is!" I said as I came up to her; "I feel as active as a chamois, and have walked so fast that I have left my uncle a long way behind. May I sit by you until he comes up?" She made room for me on the ledge of the rock, but turned her head away in her usual ungracious manner, and began to rummage in her basket, evidently in order to avoid speaking to me. But nowise daunted, I began again: "How many years have you trudged along this road, my dear Marian? Don't you find it sometimes very long and tiring for your poor legs?"

"No, sir," she replied in that abrupt and sharp tone which is peculiar to ill-tempered old women.

I still persevered. "Before the Revolution there was a fine castle on that height," I said, pointing to the ruins. "Were you ever there in those times, I mean when it was inhabited by its ancient lords?" As she made no answer, I civilly added, "You must have been very young then."

"So young that I recollect nothing about it," she growled out in a surly manner, and gathering up her bundle and her wallet she went to meet my uncle.

This reply seemed to me a funny bit of pretension on Marian's part, who must have evidently reached years of discretion at the time when the old *régime* came to an end. Without any better success, I cross-examined the Abbé Lambert; it was only since the Restoration that he had been appointed curé of Malpeire. As to the peasants, they knew nothing of the local history of their districts, and troubled themselves very little about the occurrences of former times. As to the rising generation, I have no doubt they would have been puzzled to say if thirty years or thirty centuries had elapsed since the castle of the Barons of Malpeire had been destroyed.

Once, however, as I was standing in the shade before the church door, a little peasant directed my attention to the elm-trees, and said, with evident complacency:

"Did you ever see two finer trees than those, sir; so straight and tall, and so covered with leaves? I have been told that the like of them is not to be found in all Provence, or even much further."

"They do not seem to be very old," I answered, gazing upwards at the interwoven branches which formed overhead an impervious roof of foliage.

"O, as to that," the lad replied, "who can tell how many

years it is since those trees were planted and christened?"

"Christened? what do you mean?" I asked.

"Yes, sir, christened; for that one is called Monsieur le Marquis and this one Monsieur le Baron."

"And why, my boy," I again added.

"O, why," he answered, shrugging his shoulders, as if to say "Who cares?" "I never heard *why*; it was so long ago I suppose nobody knows."

CHAPTER II.

A VISIT FROM MY UNCLE'S SCHOOLFELLOW.

I HAVE already said that there was a picture in my uncle's drawing-room which had strangely taken my fancy. It hung over an old looking-glass, which had the property of imparting a frightfully green hue to the unhappy faces reflected in it. There likewise stood on the chimney-piece two little cups of Sevres china, embellished with ciphers and miniature wreaths, perfect gems—into which Marian ruthlessly stuck her matches. I don't know why I had taken it into my head that the picture, the looking-glass, and the cups had all come from the same house, and that the person represented in the picture had often looked at herself in the mirror, and touched with her coral lips the edges of the pretty cups. This notion having once taken possession of my mind, I was seized with ardent curiosity on the subject, and framed all sorts of fanciful conjectures, worthy of figuring in the pages of a novel. By degrees a singular feeling grew out of this fancy. By dint of gazing on that portrait, I really fell in love with it, and experienced the agitations and emotions incident to that passion. All the little ornaments which adorned the chimney-piece, became to me objects of interest. I looked upon them with a kind of mysterious reverence. Marian's matches I threw away, and filled their place every day with the most beautiful flowers. Little did Dom Gêrusac imagine when he saw me buried in his folios, as he fondly imagined, with my elbows resting on my desk, that I was all the time lost in dreams about this beauty, who only existed on canvas, and composing verses in her praise. I can only plead in extenuation of this folly that I was seventeen years of age, and had just finished my course of rhetoric.

In the midst of my intense internal agitation I maintained sufficient self-command to conceal the emotions I went through in consequence of this extravagant and romantic fancy. The mere idea that anybody would suspect its existence made me feel dreadfully ashamed. But in the meantime my unsatisfactory curiosity became quite a torment. I conjured up the most extraordinary suppositions as to the name and history of the lovely creature who had sat for her picture probably a hundred years ago, as if on purpose to be the delight and the plague of my life.

It would have been easy enough to clear up the matter by putting a direct question to my uncle; but I could not bear to talk to him about it, I was so afraid of betraying my unaccountable interest in the subject. One day, however, when we were at dinner, my courage suddenly rose, and pretending to laugh as I looked up at the glass,

"O, my dear uncle," I exclaimed, "what a funny sort of looking glass that is! It makes people's faces seem as if they were made of green wax."

"But it is, nevertheless, a very pretty piece of furniture," Dom Gêrusac replied; "the frame, if you notice, is of ebony, inlaid with silver and mother-of-pearl. It is a pity that the top has been unfortunately knocked off. I suppose the arms of the family, with supporters and crest, used to be there. I found that glass in a broker's shop at D—, as well as the picture which hangs over it, and those little Sevres cups, all jumbled up together with bits of old rusty iron."

My heart beat very fast, and I said in a strangled voice, "I suppose those things came out of some great house sacked at the time of the Revolution?"

"Most likely," my uncle replied; "but there is no mark by which we can guess who may have been the owners of this old

"rubbish, as you young gentlemen are apt to call everything not in the newest fashion." Dom Gêrusac had turned round to look at the things he was speaking of, and, pointing to the portrait, he said, "And that frame, Frederic, is a very pretty one, too. Don't you think so?"

"That portrait," I exclaimed, "O, yes!"

"Dear me, no; not the portrait," he cried. "It is half rubbed out, and in very bad drawing; but the frame is really very handsome. Some day I mean to have it cleaned and repaired, and I shall then give the picture to Marian. She may nail it up in her bedroom by the side of the print of the Wandering Jew."

This speech made me shudder, but I did not venture to ask my uncle to give me the object of my romantic worship. I made up my mind to see it pass into Marian's hands, with the hope that it would be possible later on to buy it of her.

Meanwhile my uncle received a letter which filled him with delight, and turned upside-down his quiet little household. A great personage and distinguished diplomate, the Marquis de Champaubert, French ambassador at a foreign court, had written to Dom Gêrusac to say that, as he was to pass through Toulon on his way to his post, he should turn aside from his road to pay him a visit, and renew their old friendship.

My uncle forthwith summoned his privy council, that is to say, he called Marian and communicated to her the news he had received. "Let every one set to work," he enjoined. "Desire Babelou to get the blue bedroom ready, and do you devote yourself to the kitchen. M. de Champaubert will be here to-morrow. Everything must be ready in good time. You will, I am sure, take particular pains about the dinner. There are some dishes you excel in—a pigeon-pie, for instance. Try and let us have one to-morrow; and give us some *œufs à la neige*, and some roast chickens. In short, whatever you can think of that will be nicest."

"I will do my best," Marian replied in her short manner, and, without waiting for further instructions, she returned to the kitchen.

"That dear good Maximin," my uncle said, turning to me, "how glad I shall be to see him! He is my old friend. We began our studies together at the Oratorians'; but I was intended for St. Maur, and so two years afterwards I went to La Chaise Dieu. Champaubert asked leave to go there with me. He had no vocation for the religious life, but he was a good scholar and had a decided taste for the classics. His family had wished him to be a priest, but his elder brother happening to die before he had finished his studies, he reëntered the world before he could be said to have left it. I was just going to begin my novitiate when he left La Chaise Dieu. It was on All Saints' Day. I can see him now, in his blue coat and round American hat, taking leave of us at the entrance door, just before mounting his horse. O, he was a famous horseman, and so good-looking."

"Was that a very long time ago?" I foolishly asked.

"Well," said my uncle, "stop a moment. It was in 1787; therefore, thirty-five years must have elapsed since those days. I have never seen Champaubert since, nor heard about him except through the newspapers. He emigrated in the early days of the Revolution, and did not return to France till the peace. Since then, his talents and fidelity have met with their reward. The king has heaped honors and distinctions on him. He is a peer of France, an ambassador, and has I don't know how many titles and dignities. May God prosper him! He is worthy of his good fortune."

The idea of finding myself in the presence of this great man, of being presented to him, kept me awake all the night, and the first thing I did in the morning was to stand on the terrace and watch for his arrival. I was greatly perplexed to think how his Excellency's carriage and horses would manage to get through our cross-road, with its ruts and holes, and I felt no little anxiety about the reception which was in course of preparation for him. It seemed to me quite out of keeping with so distinguished a guest. I concluded, of course, that he travelled with a numerous suite, and I pictured to myself the

figure which our old servant would cut in the midst of all those fine people. I felt myself getting hot in the face as I thought of her boldly coming into the drawing-room, with her napkin on her arm, sticking herself behind Dom Gêrusac's chair, or pouring out wine for his guest with that frightful claw-like hand of hers.

In the afternoon, Babelou, the little maid who helped in the kitchen, made her appearance at the end of the terrace, and screamed to me in her most shrill voice, "M. Frederic, come; the gentleman is arriving; he is there in the avenue."

"Where is his carriage? Which way did he come?" I asked, quite puzzled. "It must have been upset in a ditch."

"His carriage!" cried Babelou, laughing. "Why, it is like your uncle's carriage—it can go along any road where a donkey can set its four feet."

And so it was! The ambassador was actually riding up to the door on a small ass, caparisoned in the fashion of the country, with a pad stuffed with straw, and no stirrups; his whole suite consisting of a peasant, who carried his portmanteau and drove the ass before him with a hazel-bough.

M. de Champaubert sprang nimbly to the ground, and threw his arms about my uncle's neck. The good old man fairly wept for joy, and faltered out as he clasped his friend's hand, "Well, I had never hoped for this. It is too great a happiness, monseigneur."

"What do you mean by monseigneur?" the Marquis exclaimed, taking his arm. "Call me Maximin, as you used to do. Do you know, my dear Thomas, that I knew you again at once?"

"So did I you," my uncle replied; "you are not the least altered."

"Come, come," rejoined the Marquis with a smile, "a little snow has fallen here since we last parted." And he ran his fingers through his gray hairs.

"If your letter had only reached me one day sooner," my uncle said, "I should have gone to meet you at O—. You must have been rather puzzled to find your way here."

"O, not the least!" his Excellency replied. "I left my carriage on the high-road, and went in search of a donkey and a boy to bring me here. I found what I wanted at a farmhouse close by."

"But who had described to you the road you were to take?" my uncle asked.

"Nobody," replied his friend. "I know this country. I have been here before." And he looked around him at the valley and the mountains.

"After you had left La Chaise Dieu?"

"About two years afterwards."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Dom Gêrusac. "How did it happen that I never heard of it?"

M. de Champaubert smiled somewhat sadly, and lowering his voice, answered, "You were at St. Pierre de Corbie, just about to make your vows. There were things at that time I did not feel as if I could write to you about."

"Why not, I wonder?" my uncle said in his kind simple manner.

I stood a little apart in silent amazement; I could not persuade myself that I had before my eyes a man who represented the King of France, and was in the habit of speaking to crowned heads. At first sight, our guest might have been taken for a plain country gentleman. His blue coat, closely buttoned over his chest, did not afford a glimpse of the least bit of red ribbon. His dress was as unpretending as possible; his manners easy and natural, and his countenance expressed at once good-nature and shrewdness. Not but there was at the same time something commanding in his appearance, and in his eye sometimes a quick flash which denoted perhaps a little pride. His face was still very handsome, and, which was odd, he looked much younger than my uncle. Dom Gêrusac, whose life had been spent in quiet scientific labors, had already the gait of an old man; whereas his friend, who had been plunged in the warfare of conflicting passions, and gone through the agitations of an eventful life, still walked with

head erect, and a firm unhesitating step.

My uncle presented me to our guest, and then the two friends entered the house arm in arm. M. de Champaubert was turning towards the garden, but Dom Gêrusac drew him another way, saying: "It is too hot out of doors; we had better go into the library."

"By all means," the other gaily replied; "your library, my dear Thomas, is, I know, your world, your kingdom, your family. You will introduce me to all the ancient and modern authors assembled here. But, first of all, will you let me have something to drink? I am dying of thirst."

My uncle went to the door of the kitchen and called Marian. "Now for it," I thought, and awaited with a kind of comical terror the effect her appearance would produce upon his Excellency; but to my great relief she did not appear. It was Babelou who came in, carrying on a large tray a bottle of old wine, some sugar, a magnificent basket of fruit, and a plateful of little yellow peaches.

"That is perfect," M. de Champaubert exclaimed, as he himself assisted Babelou to set down the tray on the table, which was all covered with manuscripts and books. "This clever little girl has guessed that I am particularly fond of these yellow peaches, with their little acid flavor. I don't know anywhere a more refreshing fruit."

"I daresay not," my uncle said with a smile. "It is only on our barren mountains that this wild production of nature is suffered to grow nowadays."

"Do sit down here, dear old schoolfellow!" the Marquis said, making room for Dom Gêrusac by his side. "We have so many things to talk about."

I asked my uncle in a whisper if he had any directions to give me, and then, out of discretion, withdrew.

A little before dinner-time Babelou came to me in the dining-room, looking aghast.

"Mercy on us, sir!" she exclaimed, "what *are* we going to do? Marian has been working so hard since yesterday, that now she is taken ill, and has just been obliged to go to bed."

I must confess that I felt an involuntary relief.

"Well, you must wait at dinner," I said to the little maid; "go and put on your best gown and a clean apron. Tell Marian to remain quietly in bed; I will let my uncle know about it."

The two friends had gone from the library into the garden, and my uncle was proudly showing off his flowers and vegetables to M. de Champaubert, who seemed delighted with all he saw, went into good-natured raptures about the fine carnations and the tall cabbages, and as he walked along the trellise picked and ate the grapes with the relish of a school-boy. I whispered to my uncle the news of Marian's illness. The dear good man went immediately to see his old servant, and I remained alone with M. de Champaubert, who, after one more turn in the garden said: "Perhaps we had better go and see if dinner is ready."

The dining-room had a window down to the ground. I opened the outer blinds and stood aside to let his Excellency go in first. The curtains were drawn up, and a bright light shining in the room; the gildings of the old frames looked to advantage in the rays of the setting sun. As M. de Champaubert entered and walked toward the chimney, his eyes caught sight of the picture over the looking-glass. He turned round to me and asked eagerly, "Do you know where that portrait came from?"

I colored up to the eyes, and stammered out, "Yes monseigneur; my uncle bought it at D——, in an old curiosity-shop."

"With that looking-glass and those two little cups?"

"I believe so, monseigneur."

Dom Gêrusac came back at that moment. "You must excuse me, my dear Maximin," he said, "if the attendance is not what I should have wished. But I have lost the best half of my household. My old maid-servant has been taken suddenly ill?"

"Never mind," M. de Champaubert replied; "we will wait on ourselves, as I have done in the days of the emigration."

Fortunately Marian had been able to attend to the cooking up to the last moment, and to give directions to her aide-de-camp Babelou. The table was in consequence perfectly laid, and the dinner excellent. I had routed out from the corner of the cellar some bottles of wine really fit to beset before a king. M. de Champaubert ate sparingly and quick, talking all the time, whereas my uncle went through his dinner with his usual calm manner and steady appetite, only heightened by the pleasure of having opposite to him so welcome a guest.

For my part I could not swallow a mouthful. Nothing could exceed my internal agitation. The Marquis's questions evidently showed that he recognized the lovely face which I had been gazing on with such rapture for the last six weeks. He knew who this woman was whose name I had despaired of ever discovering. He could tell me—there was no doubt of it—the very thing I most ardently desired to know. But how should I ever venture to put to him a question on the subject? How manage to approach it? These thoughts were running in my mind, when all at once, in the midst of a conversation in which political discussion was mixed up with school reminiscences, my uncle said to his friend, "Public affairs seem to have engrossed your whole life. You have never, I suppose, thought of marrying?"

"I beg your pardon," was the reply. And the Marquis, looking up at the picture over the chimney, added, "I was to have married the beautiful girl whose portrait that is."

"You don't say so!" my uncle exclaimed; "that anonymous portrait? It is a singular coincidence."

M. de Champaubert said, "I certainly did not expect to have seen here that likeness of the fair object of my first love."

"You must tell us all about it," Dom Gêrusac said. "As we are about recalling all our old recollections, I am glad you have happened to find here this souvenir of the past."

The Marquis smiled a little bitterly, and answered, "I can now speak of it without emotion; and since you wish it, I will give you the history of that time of my life. Not so much for your edification, my dear old friend, as for the sake of your nephew, who sits there gazing so intently on my betrothed that it would almost seem as if her fatally beautiful eyes had instilled into his soul some of their poison."

These words, whether said in jest or in earnest, put me quite out of countenance. I felt as if the speaker had read my inmost thoughts, and I could only reply to this kind of apostrophe by a nervous attempt at a cough.

My uncle, after emptying his glass at one gulp, laid both his hands on the table-cloth, which was with him a token of the deepest attention, and prepared to listen.

"Let us have coffee brought in here, and send Babelou away," M. de Champaubert said; "I must tell my story with that picture before my eyes."

CHAPTER III

MONSIEUR LE MARQUIS AND MONSIEUR LE BARON.

The day was waning. I lighted the candles on both sides of the mirror. The light thrown on the picture brought out its faded tints, and lent a vague relief to the enchanting face, which seemed to smile through the glass that covered it, like one of Greuze's lovely heads behind the half-opened curtain of a window. The Marquis fixed his eyes steadily upon it for a moment, and then, as if he guessed my secret but intense curiosity, he addressed himself to me, and said, "That is the portrait of Mademoiselle de Malpeire, the only daughter of the Baron de Malpeire."

"Of the last lord!" I exclaimed; "and she lived at the top of the mountain?"

"Yes, my young friend," M. de Champaubert replied; "and it was there that the events took place which I am about to relate." After a pause, he turned to Dom Gêrusac and said: "Do you remember, my dear Thomas, my writing to you a

letter, in which I mentioned that I was leaving Paris and going to take a journey to the south of France?"

"Yes, to be sure, I recollect it," my uncle answered. "It was the last I ever received from you, and, without meaning any reproach, it was written, if I mistake not, before the Revolution in the month of August, 1789."

"What a wonderful memory you have for dates!" M. de Champaubert exclaimed. "You are quite right, for I arrived in this country some time after the famous night of the 4th of August. But I must begin by explaining to you the origin of the friendship which existed between the Champauberts, an ancient family in Normandy, and the Malpeires of Provence. More than a hundred years ago, at the time of the war with Piedmont, the division of our army commanded by the Maréchal de Tessé occupied the frontier. My great-great grandfather, Guillaume de Champaubert, served in the Régiment d'Anvergne, as did also a young nobleman of this country, the Baron de Malpeire. They soon became sworn friends, as well as comrades in arms. Both were in the prime of life, and married to young wives, who had accompanied them to the seat of war; that is to say, they had taken up their residence at the Castle of Malpeire, which was considered an impregnable fortress. Several engagements had taken place between the French and the Piedmontese, who were ravaging the low country. In one of these engagements the Marquis de Champaubert was wounded. His wife hastened to the field of battle, about two leagues from here, and succeeded in getting him transported to the Castle of Malpeire, where he died on the following day. A short time afterwards, the Baron de Malpeire was killed under the walls of C—. After this double calamity, the two ladies remained at Malpeire, shut up by the snow which lies on these mountains, as you know, for six months out of the year. On the same day they both gave birth to sons, who were christened at the same time in the church of the village. In commemoration of this event, two elm-trees were planted and named after the new-born children. In my time the shade of these trees covered the whole square. Are they still in existence?"

"Yes, they are, monseigneur," I eagerly cried; "and they go by the name of Monsieur le Marquis and Monsieur le Baron but no one here knows why."

"The two widows spent the year of their mourning together. Subsequently they were obliged to part; but the similarity of their fate had given rise to a friendship, which lasted as long as they lived. They took care to instil the same feelings in the hearts of their sons, who in their turn transmitted them to their children. Although living at the opposite extremes of the kingdom, the two families did not fail to communicate to one another any interesting domestic event; and on all respective birthdays letters of congratulation were duly sent. A long-standing desire for a matrimonial alliance between the two families had not ceased to exist, but Providence seemed to have decreed that their wishes should meet with constant disappointment. During three generations not a single girl was born in the house of Champaubert, and the daughters of the Lords of Malpeire all died in infancy. I had often in my childhood heard this spoken of at home, and I also knew that the Baron de Malpeire happened now to have a daughter about my own age. It was not, therefore much of a surprise to me when, two years after I had left La Chaise Dieu, my father told me one day that he had arranged my marriage with Mlle. de Malpeire. 'My dear Maximin,' those were his words. 'I think that this marriage combines all that we can desire. I knew the Baron when he came to Paris, about twenty-five years ago, to be married to Mlle. d'Herbelay, one of the most charming persons in the world. He is a nobleman of the old school, a little narrow-minded and ignorant, but full of generous and noble feelings. The young lady's dowry is amply sufficient, and as to the name of Malpeire, it speaks for itself—it is one of the oldest in Provence. I have not made any particular inquiries with regard to the beauty of your future bride, you will soon be able to judge of it yourself; I only know that she is in her twentieth year.' My father

said this with a smile, which made me conclude that an agreeable surprise was in store for me, and that Mlle. de Malpeire was very handsome. You see by that picture that I was not mistaken."

"Yes, she must have been a pretty girl," my uncle said, raising his eyebrows, with the kind of look a peasant might have put on if called upon to admire an ancient coin or a manuscript in a dead language.

"I arrived here, as I said before, towards the end of August," M. de Champaubert continued. "I had been travelling eight days on the dusty road in an uncomfortable post-chaise, and I well remember the delight I felt at the sight of these mountains and green valleys, and the pleasure it was to hear the sound of running water in every direction. The present road did not then exist; there was only a path for horses and mules. I was riding, and a mule-driver followed with my luggage. This man had travelled a little, and though a native of the country, he spoke French, and told me the names of the various hamlets which we saw at a distance, and had a story to relate about each of them. When we came to the entrance of the gorge, which is commonly called the Pass of Malpeire, he pointed out to me a flat stone which juts out of the rock and forms a kind of seat a little below the road. Have you ever noticed it?"

"To be sure I have," my uncle answered. "It is there my old servant Marian rests when we go to mass."

"I was expecting to hear some tale about robbers in that cut-throat-looking place, but my guide only said, 'This is the place, sir, where the daughter of the Baron de Malpeire came to life again.' 'What daughter,' I asked. 'Oh, the one who is now full of health and spirits. When she was just seven years old she sickened and died, as all her brothers and sisters had done, who have now been a long time in heaven. She was so really and truly dead that they put her into a coffin, with a white wreath on her head and a crucifix between her hands, and set out from the castle to lay her in the vault of the old chapel at the bottom of the hill, which is the burial-place of the lords of the manoir. When the young girls who were carrying the body arrived at this spot they were tired, and placed the coffin on that stone seat while they rested a little. M. le Curé had left off chanting the *Libera nos Domine*. Nobody spoke, and not a sound was to be heard except the murmur of the torrent flowing through the ravine. All at once a little voice came out of the coffin. The child sat up, looked about her as if for the water, and said, 'I am so thirsty.' All who were there felt frightened when they saw her lift up her shroud; but M. le Curé took her up in his arms and carried her back to her mother alive and well.' This story, I can hardly tell why, made me shudder. I had been dwelling incessantly during my journey on thoughts of love and marriage. I trembled to think how near I had been losing my bride. The wild scenery and the gloomy grandeur of the surrounding country worked on my imagination; I was enraptured with the aromatic perfume of the Alpine plants, the solitary beauty of the mountains, the confused but harmonious sounds which rose from the deep woods, the delicious air I was breathing. It was in this frame of mind that I arrived in Malpeire. The castle was at that time an old fortress to which some modern additions had been from time to time joined on. It was surrounded by formidable walls, and flanked by crested towers; but a new frontage concealed the lower part of the keep, which stood at the edge of a perpendicular rock above the precipice. The windows were provided with green blinds, and the platform on which they looked had been transformed into a little flower-garden, open to every wind. But these embellishments had altered in nothing the character of the old baronial residence. The principal entrance was to the north, and on that side the castle completely preserved the warlike and severe aspect of the buildings of the middle ages. A wide moat surrounded the ramparts, and the entrance-gate stood between two little towers, still furnished with falconets. The drawbridge existed in the same state as at the time of the wars of Provence, but for many years it had not been raised, and its solid planks formed a kind of passage, without chains

or hand-rail. When I arrived the sun was just setting. I dismounted at the drawbridge, and, throwing the bridle of my horse to the guide, I walked on looking about for some one to speak to. After going through a vaulted passage, I came into a large court surrounded by ancient buildings, the mullioned windows of which were all closely shut up. No one appeared, and so profound was the silence that the castle might have been supposed to be uninhabited. After once walking round the court, I ventured to push open a door which stood ajar, and I saw before me the first steps of a winding staircase and a niche in the wall with an image of the Blessed Virgin surrounded with bouquets. I went up, feeling my way as I ascended, and on reaching the first landing-place found myself at the entrance of a spacious and lofty room, the furniture of which seemed to me to date from the time of the League. A solitary lamp was burning at the corner of a table. By its light I could just discern the tapestried walls, the high-backed chairs, the large branched candlesticks of copper, and the chimney, with its heavy mantelpiece projecting over the hearth like a stone canopy. I concluded that this room, or rather hall, must be the ante-chamber of another apartment, where I could hear the sharp, shrill yapping of a little dog who was barking furiously, no doubt at the sound of a strange footstep. I knocked to give notice of my presence, and a stout servant-girl, dressed in green baize, made her appearance; but without allowing me time to give an account of myself, she ran towards the door at the other end, calling out, "Mlle. Boinet, Mlle. Boinet." A middle-aged woman, with the air and manner of a confidential attendant in a great family, then came forward and made me a low curtsy. When I mentioned my name she assumed a smiling, discreet expression of countenance, which seemed intended to convey that she knew what I was come about, and with a true Parisian accent, which showed her to have been born within hearing of the bells of Notre Dame, she said: "I beg, sir, to offer to you my most humble respects. I will hasten to inform Madame la Baronne of your arrival." A moment afterwards the folding-doors opened, and Madame la Baronne herself, coming forward, said to me: "M. de Champaubert, I beg you a thousand pardons. I am more shocked than I can express that you did not find any one below to show you up. The fact is, we did not expect you till to-morrow." I apologized for having arrived thus unexpectedly, and, Madame de Malpeire having invited me in, I offered my hand to lead her back to her room. When I crossed the threshold of the door I was so taken by surprise that I could not help exclaiming: "This is something marvellous, Madame la Baronne! You have managed to carry off the *salon* of one of the most charming hotels of the Faubourg St. Germain, or of Versailles, and to place it at the top of this mountain!" "Well," she answered, laughing, "I have contrived to arrange a corner of this old castle so as to make it possible to live in it. When the curtains are drawn and the candles lighted, I can almost fancy myself at Paris. But, alas! when I look out the illusion is at an end. Instead of the gardens of the Luxembourg, I see nothing from my window but the roofs of the village, and on every side rocks, woods and mountains. Indeed, I have often been tempted to say what my late mother-in-law—she was a Forbin Janson—wrote from here to her uncle the Cardinal, just after she was married—'Here I am, lodged in the skies, with the eagle at my beck, and near enough to the moon to touch it with my hand.' She laughed again, and, after inviting me to sit down, took up on her knees the little spaniel, who still kept growling at me *sotto voce*, and sank back into her chair in a gracefully indolent attitude. The Baronne de Malpeire was a thin small woman, who looked at first sight much younger than she was. Her dress was somewhat old-fashioned, but it was in keeping with the style of her delicate features and her coquettish manners. What with rouge and powder, her complexion exhibited the peculiar brilliancy of a pretty family portrait. She managed to wear with all the ease and grace of a *grande dame*, that most troublesome invention of the last century, an enormous flounced petticoat, spreading over two stiff projecting pockets,

and walked with great dignity in the most prodigiously high-heeled shoes. I was too much absorbed, too much agitated, to attend much to anything but the one predominating thought in my mind. Every sound made me start, and I kept watching the door in hopes every moment of seeing Mlle. de Malpeire appear, though I could not summon courage to inquire after her, or even to pronounce her name. 'The Baron is out shooting, as usual,' Madame de Malpeire said; 'but it will not be long now before he comes home.' In the meantime, I will order some refreshments to be brought up for you here. What will you have? a little wine, with a slice of dry toast? or a glass of *eau sucrée*, perhaps.' I declined, but she insisted. 'Well, but a cup of coffee, then with me? Nobody ever refuses a cup of coffee. Mlle. Boinet, bring the little table here, and ring that we may send for hot water.' The lady in waiting pushed a little round stand in front of her mistress, and placed upon it, between two lighted candles, a small chest of sandalwood. Madame de Malpeire opened this case and took out of its blue-velvet compartments a coffee-pot, a sugar-basin, and those two little cups you see on the chimney-piece."

"O, I felt sure of it!" I cried, clasping my hands on my forehead.

The Marquis looked at me with a faint smile, and continued: "When the coffee was ready, Madame de Malpeire poured it out into two cups, gave me one, and she took the other herself, she said, 'Mlle. Boinet, will you let my daughter know that I wish to see her? Not one word more, if you please.' I felt I changed color, but I said nothing. My agitation seemed to amuse Madame de Malpeire. 'Come, now,' she whispered, with a smile, 'it would be all very well if you were the young lady.' After a pause, she added more seriously, 'That little girl of mine does not, you know, expect to see you here, so you must not be surprised if she does not welcome you at the first moment the way you deserve.' 'I deserve nothing yet,' I cried. 'I can only hope. And so I hope, madame, that I shall not prove unworthy in your daughter's eyes of the happiness that has been promised to me.' Almost at the moment I was saying this, Mlle. de Malpeire came in by the door opposite to the one which opened on the large room. I heard the sound of her light footstep; but when she saw me, she stopped short and seemed inclined to make her escape. Her mother, to relieve her embarrassment, took her by the hand, and leading her forward, said in a playful manner, 'This is my daughter, sir, a very shy young lady, but when she has seen more of the world I have no doubt she will soon learn to make herself agreeable.' I muttered a few words of compliment, to which Mlle. de Malpeire made no reply beyond a silent courtesy, and then, with a cold, distant, almost haughty expression of countenance, she sat down by her mother. The shyness which Madame de Malpeire had spoken of evidently amounted either to an excessive reserve or a total absence of any desire to please. But so great was the charm about this lovely girl, that, in spite of her ungraciousness, it was impossible not to be irresistibly captivated. That portrait gives only a faint idea of her beauty. Who could ever have painted the exquisite delicacy of expression, and her eyes, which seemed at one moment to flash fire, and an instant afterwards to express the most bewitching sweetness? Yes, she was wonderfully beautiful. She possessed that extraordinary power of fascination which robbed Adam of Paradise, and would have beguiled Satan himself had he been made of mortal clay. Dazzled by this fair vision, I lost all self-possession, and really during the whole of that evening I must have appeared a perfect fool. For the first time in my life, I had fallen desperately in love."

CHAPTER IV.

A SUITOR UNDER THE OLD REGIME.

"Madame de Malpeire was quietly sipping her coffee, and fortunately took upon herself the whole burden of conversation,

'My dear love,' she said, glancing over her daughter's dress, 'I don't like you in that cotton gown and those clumsy flat shoes; and why is your hair tied up quite at the back of your head, and without any powder? It is very evident that Mlle. Boinet has had nothing to do with your toilet. You really look a great fright!' 'Do I, mamma?' Mlle. de Malpeire said, as she raised her eyes to the glass in which I had been contemplating for the last quarter of an hour that beautiful fair hair, fastened by a simple tortoise-shell comb, her blooming color, and the fineness of her slender waist, enclosed in a corsage of blue and white print. Her eyes met mine in the glass. She instantly turned her head away, with a look not so much of confusion as of annoyance.

"You must excuse my daughter's *déshabillé*," Madame de Malpeire added, addressing herself to me. 'She did not know we should have company this evening, or she would have dressed for supper. I wish she would take more pains about her dress, but I cannot get her to attend to it. She pretends—foolish child—that she cannot walk in high-heeled shoes.' 'Mademoiselle may perhaps be right on that point,' I ventured to say. 'It must be very difficult, Madame la Baronne, to keep one's balance in shoes like yours.' 'Oh! not at all,' she quickly replied. 'I assure you it is all habit. I should not think of taking a step beyond my room with my morocco slippers, and with these little shoes I can walk very well.' She put out at the same time her tiny foot, encased in a shoe of that absurd shape which only allowed the great toe to touch the ground, and then striking together the high wooden heels, covered with white leather, she added with a sigh: 'I have danced in shoes of this kind in a ballet at the Hôtel de Richelieu, in which I appeared as a shepherdess. But that was a long time ago.' Then passing by a sudden transition to graver thoughts, she exclaimed: 'It is a terrible thing to live as we do here, excluded from society, and with hardly any intercourse with the world. I have never been able to reconcile myself to this kind of banishment. When I came to this spot after my marriage, I little thought I should spend my life here. I endured my solitude and *ennui* with patience, because I was young, and with so many years of life before me; and felt as if there would be time enough later for amusement, and so I allowed my youth to slip by. M. le Baron is kindness and good nature itself; though we have not the same tastes, and though the life he leads here suits him exactly, he would always have been willing to take me to Paris. Every spring and every autumn the journey was talked of; but I have had a great many children, and whenever the time to set out approached, I was not able to travel. If I had not arranged this apartment in the way you see, and hadn't my poor Boinet with me, I don't know what I should have done; I must have died of *ennui*.' 'But heaven in its mercy, Madame la Baronne, spared you one of your children,' I timidly replied; 'and whilst you devoted yourself to your daughter's education, the isolation you complain of must have been less sensibly felt.' 'Oh! of course,' she answered, and bending down to fasten a bow of ribbon which had been lying on the table in her daughter's hair, she added, 'This little puss has never left me. I taught her myself to read. I also tried to give her music lessons, but the attempt was not very successful. Her education has been left a little to chance. I brought from Paris, with some other furniture, a little book-case filled with works chosen by my late uncle, the Baillé d'Herbelay, who was a philosopher, and a friend of all the learned men of his time. My daughter has taken possession of those books, ancient and modern, and though they are not particularly amusing, her greatest pleasure is to read them. To-day she has spent the whole morning, poring over a huge volume.'

"I ventured to address myself to Mlle. de Malpeire, and to ask her what was the work which had interested her so much. 'The Philosophical History of the East and of the West Indies,' by the Abbé Raynal,' she answered. 'It is a very nice book, only I am sorry to find in it some passages favorable to the Jesuits.' 'What, are you against the Jesuits?' I asked. 'Are you, then, a Jansenist, mademoiselle?' 'No,

sir,' she quickly replied; 'I am nothing at all.' 'I am delighted that my daughter is fond of reading,' Madame de Malpeire said, playing with her snuff-box as she spoke. 'For my part, I never could apply my mind to it, and as to serious books, I cannot endure them.' Astonished at this undisguised frivolity, I answered, 'If I might venture a suggestion, I would advise you, Madame la Baronne, to go out sometimes, and walk on those beautiful adjacent mountains, clothed with almost more flowers than grass. The finest gardens do not present, I assure you, a more brilliant and smiling picture.' 'Yes, I daresay it is very pretty,' she replied, in an indifferent manner; 'but the roads which lead to these charming spots are not so smooth as the alleys of the Park of Versailles. We should have no end of precipices to cross.' 'In that case,' I said, 'we must look nearer home. If I were you, Madame la Baronne, I would try and interest myself about the people among whom I lived, and the details of rural life. I would often go into the village, and visit the tenants.' 'O, dreadful,' she exclaimed, laughing; 'you do not know what you advise! Every Sunday at church I have a distant view of these good people, and I can assure you that it is quite enough to take away any wish to see them nearer.'

"I saw a look of indignation in Mlle. de Malpeire's eyes, and in an almost imperceptible manner she moved a little farther from her mother's side. What I had said seemed, on the contrary, to meet with her tacit approval. She turned towards me with a less stern expression of countenance. 'There are, then, some very beautiful flowers, sir, on our wild mountains?' she said. 'As beautiful,' I replied, 'as any of our gardens can boast. There are slopes entirely covered with the blue heartsease and the purple-headed aconite and all kinds of other plants, one more lovely than the other. But I suppose you have often walked, mademoiselle, in that part of your father's property?' 'No, sir, never,' she coldly replied. 'My mother does not go beyond the walls of the castle, except to church, and she would not allow me to walk anywhere without her.' 'Here is my husband,' cried Madame de Malpeire, turning towards the half open window; 'he is coming into the court-yard.'

"This announcement was speedily corroborated by a confused noise of footsteps, and the loud barking of several dogs. Almost immediately afterwards the sound of a heavy tread was heard in the adjoining room, and then the Baron made his appearance, with his game-bag slung over his shoulder, and a fowling piece in his hand. Had I met him anywhere else I should have taken him for a poacher. He threw his cap on the sofa, wiped his sunburnt face, and, after cordially embracing me, inquired after my father. Then, turning to the Baronne and Mlle. de Malpeire, he said, 'How are you, wife?—how do you do, my little girl? Guess what game I bring you.' 'Four-legged or two-legged creatures?' asked Mlle. de Malpeire, slipping her hand into the bag. 'Both,' cried the Baron, in a tone of triumph. 'I have three white partridges, two red ones, and a leveret, which has kept me on the run the whole morning. I should have ended by losing it, if it had not been for that tall fellow who won the pewter plate at the wrestling match last year.' 'Pinatel?' Mlle. de Malpeire said. 'Exactly so,' the Baron answered displaying his spoils; 'he just happened to be there with his dog—a dog I would willingly give ten crowns for, though he does look like a badger. I had shot that hare in the back, and it went tumbling down into a precipice under the rock of Pierre Fourcha. My dogs would not fetch it; even Leander refused. Upon this, Pinatel went in quest of it with his cur, and brought me back the creature, and here it is.' As he was emptying his bag, the Baron exclaimed, 'Look here, what on earth is this little queer concern?' 'Let us see,' both the ladies said. It was a wooden figure, in the style of the Nuremberg dolls, roughly carved with a knife.

"What is that bit of wood intended to represent?' Madame de Malpeire asked, without touching it. 'A sportsman with his gun in his hand, I suppose,' the Baron answered. 'No, papa; it is a shepherd keeping his flock, and leaning on his

staff,' Mlle. de Malpeire said, as she took hold of the little figure. 'Do put your gloves on before you touch that thing,' the Baronne said; 'how do you know through whose hands that figure has passed? I daresay some peasant-boy made it in some dirty shed, sitting on the straw amongst his sheep.' 'Yes, very likely,' replied her daughter, and she put the little figure in her pocket. 'I think it is the image of some saint,' the Baron opined; 'my gamekeeper slipped it, I have no doubt, into my bag to bring me luck.'

"He then took off his belt, threw his powder-flask on his wife's little table, and sank into the soft depths of an easy-chair, with his elbows resting on the pearl-colored damask cushions. Madame de Malpeire sat opposite to him, playing with her fan, and now and then taking a pinch of Spanish snuff out of a box of burnished gold. You may easily imagine what a strange contrast the husband and wife presented. He with his thick blue-cloth waistcoat, his leather gaiters reaching above his knees, his sunburnt face, large heavy hands, and colossal figure; she with her bows, her lace, her small, light figure, dainty manners and aristocratic refinements. I looked on in astonishment.

"The Baron asked me what was the news at Court, according to the style still in use at that time, and the conversation naturally turned on recent events. The old nobleman could not at all realize the importance and significance of what he called an audacious sedition, and spoke of it in terms of indignant contempt. 'Sir,' he said to me emphatically, 'we have nothing to apprehend. The King is master, and he will show himself to be so as soon as he chooses it. With one look, one word, he will crush the factious multitude.' 'Who knows?' Mlle. de Malpeire ejaculated, with a singular expression of countenance. I said to myself, 'The study of the *Philosophical History of the East and West Indies* has, I see, borne its fruits.' But I considered this leaning towards the new opinions as the youthful exuberance of a generous spirit, and I was not at all anxious as to the results it might have.

"Supper was announced and we went into the next room. By Madame de Malpeire's desire I led her daughter in, and sat down by her side. But she did not vouchsafe to look again towards me, and when I spoke to her she answered shortly, and with marked coldness of manner, still I could evidently see that she was by no means out of spirits. On the contrary, there was a half-smiling, half-dreamy expression in her face which enchanted me.

"After supper we retired to the saloon, which was lighted up and arranged as if a numerous society had been expected. The arm-chairs were placed in a semi-circle opposite to the chimney, and a screen embroidered in gold and purple silk, with the arms of the Malpeires in the centre, stood before the hearth. The harpsichord was open, and the card-table set out. Madame de Malpeire sat down at the instrument, and played an easy little sonata with her eyes looking up at the ceiling, and her head moving to and fro in time with her performance. Meanwhile the Baron fell asleep, and Mlle. de Malpeire gradually approached the window, and at last ensconced herself in the recess, half concealed by the curtain. I could see her profile. She was leaning her forehead on her hands, and gazing through the half-closed shutters on the outer darkness, in the midst of which a few lights in the direction of the village showed that some of the cottagers had not yet retired to rest.

"'Will you play cards with me?' Madame de Malpeire said, as she rose from the instrument. 'What do you say to a hundred at picquet? It was the Baillè d'Herbelay's favorite game, and his luck at it was wonderful. I was his scholar but it is so long since I have played, that I am afraid I have forgotten his lessons.' The card-table was near the window, and when I was seated at it I found there was only the curtain between me and Mlle. de Malpeire. She immediately moved away, and sat down by her mother. 'Do you, then never play, Madame la Baronne?' I said, shuffling the cards. 'No, not at picquet,' she answered. 'The Baron can never keep his eyes open after supper, and as to my daughter, I

could never teach her the difference between the king of hearts and a knave of diamonds. Having nobody to play with me, I sometimes amuse myself with a solitary game at patience. It is a sort of method of telling fortunes with cards.' 'Will you tell me mine?' I said. 'O, by all means,' she answered, laughing and looking at her daughter. 'We will consult the cards to see how soon a certain handsome dark young man will marry a fair young lady.' Mlle. de Malpeire blushed at this direct allusion, and a slight frown contracted her eyebrows. A moment afterwards she asked her mother's leave to withdraw, and curtseying to me left the room without speaking. 'Ah, Madame,' I exclaimed. 'I am sadly afraid the cards do not return a favorable answer.' 'In that case,' she quickly replied, 'they do not speak the truth.' And holding out the pack to me, she added, 'Cut, if you please, my dear son-in-law.' We played six games at picquet. Madame de Malpeire was in ecstasies; 'it seemed,' she said 'like being in Paris again.'

"When the clock struck twelve, the Baron woke up, and said, looking at the clock, 'You ought, I am sure, to be tired. We have kept you up much too late. It is all Madame de Malpeire's fault. We have got into this bad habit of sitting up.'

"According to the old fashioned ideas of hospitality, he lighted me to my room, and, before taking leave of me for the night, he pressed my hand affectionately, and said with some emotion, 'Your coming here has made me very happy. Good night, my dear Count. To-morrow we shall talk of the future.'

"In spite of the fatigues of the day, I did not rest much that night. Mlle. de Malpeire's image kept pursuing me, and seemed to hover behind the curtain of my canopied bed. If I fell asleep, I saw her, and when I awoke my thoughts carried on the dream. This feverish excitement subsided towards morning. The lovely phantom which had haunted me vanished with the first rays of dawning light, and the delightful hopes and anticipations which had filled my mind during the night, gave way to an unaccountable feeling of depression. I was in this state when, at an early hour, the Baron walked into my room. Though the clock had not yet struck seven, I was already up and dressed. He took a chair, and, sitting down by me, began at once, without any preface: 'My dear Count, the reception we have given you must have plainly shown what our feelings are with regard to your views in coming here. You have quite won my wife's heart; she is delighted with your appearance, your manners, your conversation. For my part, I felt love to you at once because of your great likeness to your father, the worthiest man I know. Now it is for you to say if there is anything about my daughter's looks which does not take your fancy, or if you find her pretty and attractive enough for you?' 'O, Monsieur le Baron!' I exclaimed, 'she is the loveliest, the most charming person I ever beheld! If I can obtain her hand, I shall consider myself the most fortunate man in the world.' 'In that case,' the Baron answered, with a pleased smile, 'we have nothing to do but to draw up the settlements and fix the day for the wedding.' 'You do not anticipate, then, any obstacle?' I asked in an agitated voice. 'No; what obstacle could there be?' he replied. 'You have my consent and Madame de Malpeire's—what would you desire more?' I clasped the hand he held out to me in token of his promise, and then asked him as a favor to delay my happiness for a little while. 'I beseech you, not to tell Mlle. de Malpeire that you have accepted my proposals for her. Allow me a few days, during which I shall endeavor to win her own consent.'

"He laughed and answered, 'Oh! by all means, my dear Count; I can refuse no request of yours. Pay your court to my daughter, fair Amadis. Her heart must be made of steel if it does not soon surrender at discretion. Now,' he added, 'come to breakfast, and then I will take you over the castle. We have plenty of time to spare; my wife only gets up for dinner at twelve o'clock.'

"The Castle de Malpeire is now, I suppose a heap of ruins; but at that time not one stone of its ramparts was missing, and it contained treasures of antiquarian value. The armory and

the archives especially were full of rare and highly interesting curiosities. In the tower of the keep were some banners which had been brought back from the Holy Land by one of the lords of Malpeire at the time of the Crusades. They consisted only of strips of faded yellow silk fastened to a plain staff of black wood. As the baron stood gazing on these trophies, he said: 'They may abolish all titles of nobility, they may deprive us of all our rights, but they can never turn those old Saracen banners into mere worthless rags. And it is the same with us. As long as our race exists, it will be noble by right, and noble in fact, in spite of revolutions.' I quote the old nobleman's words, because they give you an idea of his principles, and they account for the stern inflexibility he testified later on.

"A little before dinner time Madame de Malpeire sent Mlle. Boinet to request me to come to her room. To my great disappointment, I found her alone.

"'Good morning, my dear Count,' she said. 'The Baron has given me a hint of what passed between you this morning. I was longing to tell you how charmed I am with the delicacy of your sentiments. They are worthy of a high-minded gentleman. I approve very much of your wish to begin, in the first place, by winning my daughter's affections.' 'I shall try my utmost to do so,' I answered with a sigh. 'You will not be at a loss for opportunities of ingratiating yourself,' replied Madame de Malpeire. 'I would, for instance, advise you to join my daughter in the parterre, where she is gone to take a walk. I have secured for you this little *tête-à-tête* with her.'

CHAPTER V.

THE COURTSHIP.

"Mademoiselle de Malpeire was walking slowly under the shade of what used to be called a pleached alley, a sort of long bower on one side of the parterre, ending with an arbor, if at least a sort of trellis painted light green, up which a few creepers were twisting their sickly shoots, could be dignified by that name. I hurried into a little walk which ran parallel to the alley, but Mlle. de Malpeire was so engrossed by her own thoughts that she did not notice my approach. I saw her go into the summer-house and seat herself on the bench where she had left her work-basket. For a few minutes she remained in a pensive attitude, her head leaning on her hand, her elbow resting on a little garden table. I did not venture to interrupt her meditation, but when she took up her embroidery and began diligently to ply her needle, I joined her in the arbor. The instant she saw me, Mlle. de Malpeire rose as if she meant to go away. I hastened to say 'Madame la Baronne gave me leave to come and look for you, mademoiselle. Will you allow me to offer you my hand to escort you back to the drawing-room?'

"She bowed in a way that did not imply either consent or refusal, and continued to keep her eyes bent down on her work. I felt too much agitated to begin the conversation, and remained silent, which must have seemed to her extraordinary. In order to relieve my embarrassment, I took up and held in my hand one end of the long strip of blue silk which she was ornamenting with silver and gold lace. The taste and execution of this elaborate piece of embroidery was very questionable, but I kept gazing upon it as if it had been a *chef d'œuvre* worthy of the most profound admiration. After having carefully studied its details, I replaced it in a very respectful manner on the table before Mlle. de Malpeire, and asked her for whom she intended this work of her hands. 'For him who shall win it,' she replied, spreading out the piece of silk on her knees, in order to judge of the effect of a bit of edging she had been adding to the embroidery. 'Is there, then, going to be a tournament?' I said, with a smile; 'because in that case, mademoiselle, I shall certainly enter the lists, and dispute against all comers the prize you propose to award the conqueror.' 'No, sir,' she answered, with a half-amused look, 'I am sure you won't.'

'Why not, mademoiselle?' I exclaimed, 'I would willingly run the risk of my life to obtain—I do not say this scarf, but something far less precious—a ribbon, or even a flower which you had worn.' She resented this foolish speech by turning her head away with a look of annoyance. 'Do tell me,' I urged, 'what would be the way to win so inestimable a prize.' 'The way would be,' she answered, 'to overcome a crowd of competitors.' This was said with a smile bordering on a sneer. 'I shall carry it off,' I exclaimed. 'You will do no such thing,' she said again, smiling, 'you will not even try to do so.' 'What can prevent me?' I asked. She replied—'Next Sunday is the *fête* of the village. All the young men will take part in the games. In the afternoon they wrestle on the green, and the strongest and most active of the lot will receive this scarf. So you see that I was right when I said that you would not even wish to compete for it.'

"I was weak enough to feel vexed with this explanation, and I instantly replied. 'And so, then, mademoiselle, the work of your hands is to figure by the side of the pewter dish your father was mentioning yesterday. Allow me to say that this is doing too great an honor in my opinion to that public-house trophy.' She seemed more deeply wounded by these words than I had expected. The color rose in her face, and she exclaimed, in a tone of indignation and even anger, 'You despise, I see, the people and their amusements. Your pride disdains the industrious, simple-hearted men whose labor you live upon. But patience, patience!'

"It was hardly then the time to make my profession of faith on philosophical and political subjects, so I merely said, 'I assure you that I neither despise nor disdain anybody, even the most obscure and humble. I must, however, admit that I have sympathies and repugnances which result from education.' 'From your prejudices,' she subjoined in a low voice. I did not choose to take exception to this phrase, which might have led to an argument, and I contented myself with answering, 'I own that I am exclusively attached to the society in which I have always lived, and I am convinced that you will share that feeling when you have once taken your place in it, amongst the most lovely, the most admired, the respected of its members.' She shook her head, and in an almost audible voice uttered the word 'Never.' 'What!' I exclaimed, 'have you not the least desire to become acquainted with that refined and intellectual world which your education must have given you already some idea of? Would you not like to leave for a while your solitary home, and visit that great city of Paris you have often heard of?' 'No, sir,' she replied; 'it would give me, on the contrary, the greatest pain to leave our poor mountains. I dread everything that could lead to my going away from here.'

"I was not altogether displeased with this reply, for it was evident that if Mlle. de Malpeire persisted in her resolution never to leave the old fortress where she had been born, I had every chance of becoming her husband, if only from the lack of any other possible suitor. I also saw storms in the future likely to obscure the calm and brilliant existence which I should otherwise have planned for her elsewhere; and the idea of living in retirement with so charming a companion in this remote corner of the world was by no means distasteful to me. 'You may be right,' I said, after a short silence. 'It is perhaps true wisdom to prefer the peace and tranquillity you enjoy here to any other mode of existence. Everywhere else your life might be disturbed by events against which no human foresight could secure you. If the Revolution does not stop, who knows what will be the fate of that brilliant, refined, fashionable society I was speaking of just now? It would be far better to live in the most profound seclusion than to witness the decay and destruction of that old French society to which the new *régime* has already dealt such terrible blows. Its ranks are already thinning; the nobility emigrates or withdraws into the provinces. I should probably find in Paris many *salons* shut up, many aristocratic houses deserted. Under these circumstances, I could easily make up my mind to give up the world, and lead the life of a simple country gentleman.'

"'You, sir!' she quickly replied, 'you could not do it. You would be like my mother, forever regretting the parties, the balls, the visits, the card-playing and all the amusements you have been accustomed to.' 'It would only depend upon you,' I exclaimed, with a burst of impassioned admiration, 'to prevent my regretting anything.' She drew back to the farthest end of the bench on which we were sitting, and shrugged her shoulders with a scornful and defiant expression, which would have made another woman ugly, but which, by some unaccountable fascination, only served to render her more captivating. Then, without taking any farther notice of me, as if tired of conversation, she leant on her elbows against the trellis, and through that sort of lattice sat gazing on the landscape. Her muslin cap had fallen off her head, and though her face was turned away from me, I could see, through the locks of her fair hair, its lovely outline, her smooth white temple and swan-like neck, at the back of which were hanging the ends of a black ribbon. A rather long silence ensued. I was watching her with anxiety and admiration, not venturing to speak first, but impatiently waiting for the moment she would turn her head towards me. She had not changed her position, and seemed absorbed in a sort of gloomy reverie. But all at once I saw her start and blush to the roots of her hair. I could almost perceive the beating of her heart through the folds of the muslin handkerchief which covered her breast. She leant trembling against the trellis work, as if ready to faint from the excess of her agitation. With an irresistible curiosity I sprang from the seat and stood behind her, looking over her shoulder and trying to make out the cause of that extraordinary emotion. But in vain I cast my eyes in every direction. There was no one passing under the castle walls. Everything was quiet and silent about the place, and farther off I could see nothing but women washing their linen near a fountain, where my mule-driver was watering his beasts, and beyond the village only a few peasants at work here and there, and one or two goat-herds following in the wake of their wandering flocks.

"All this lasted but a short moment. Mlle. de Malpeire drew a deep breath, and hid her face an instant with her pocket-handkerchief. When she removed it the burning blush had passed away from her cheeks. She turned towards me with a calm, proud look, which showed she did not think I had noticed anything. And indeed I remained in complete doubt, not knowing how to account for what I had observed, and almost inclined to believe my fancy had deceived me. Twelve o'clock struck, and the dinner-bell ringing, I offered to lead Mlle de Malpeire back to the house, but she declined on the plea that she wished to gather some flowers on her way through the garden. We met at the hall-door. She then made me a curtsy, just touched the sleeve of my coat with the tip of her fingers, and we entered the house together.

"At dinner the conversation naturally reverted to public affairs, and the events which had taken place during the last few months. 'The effect of these disorders has been felt even in this part of the country,' the Baron said. 'The peasantry, especially the younger men, are infected by a very seditious spirit, and a secret agitation reigns in the whole neighborhood. Each fresh piece of political news serves to keep up the excitement.' 'The political news!' I exclaimed; 'and how does it reach these good people, I wonder?' 'By a number of indefatigable agents,' the Baron replied. 'For instance, through those itinerant artisans who wander about the country carrying on their back the whole of their stock-in-trade, and those lusty vagabonds, too, who make it their business to haunt the village fairs and festivals for the purpose of competing for prizes at the running and wrestling matches. The news these persons circulate is transmitted from one neighborhood to another with considerable rapidity. They are the most active propagators of sedition, and have already done a great deal of harm. Lately they spread the report that the Assembly had decreed the destruction of all the habitations of the nobility, from the fortified castles defended by ramparts down to the small manor-houses with their dovecots and rabbit-warrens. Instantly the peasants in the plains were stirred up like a nest

of ants, and marched to the assault of the Chateau de Mansane, a handsome building in the modern style, with a suite of apartments on the ground floor as easy of access as a ball-room. The next day a detachment of the Regiment of Bourgogne quartered at — arrived to quell the disturbance, but all was over by that time. The peasants had dispersed, after burning and laying everything to waste. They are difficult times, but I have no fear as to the issue,' the Baron said, with a confidence that could not be shaken. 'It is not the first time that factions have desolated France, and our fathers were familiar with civil wars. We shall do as they did; we shall fight for our religion, our King, and our rights! These old walls have been more than once besieged by the Huguenots in the days of the League, but never scaled.'

"After dinner the Baron said he was going to take a little turn with his gun in the warren. This meant a walk of more than three leagues, which generally lasted until nightfall. I remained therefore alone with Madame de Malpeire, for her daughter had disappeared as soon as we had left the dining-room. I saw her go into a little boudoir, the door of which remained half open, and when she moved about I could just catch sight of her shadow on the oak floor.

"'Well, my dear sir,' said Madame de Malpeire, seating herself comfortably in her arm-chair, 'have you been paying your court?' 'I have, madame, but I am very much out of heart,' 'O, monsieur,' she cried, 'you have no occasion to be so. I know that my daughter is not at all tender-hearted. She will not appear at first to like you, but it is impossible that she should not appreciate your merits. It may be some time before you succeed in touching the heart of this obdurate fair one, but, in the mean time, I can see no objection to your marrying her.'

"The unaccountable circumstance which had disturbed my mind in the morning recurred to me, and I said, in a hesitating manner, 'But suppose a more fortunate man than myself has already succeeded in winning her affections?' At these words, Madame de Malpeire cast up her eyes and her hands. 'My dear sir,' she exclaimed, 'there is not for ten leagues round a man to whom a girl like my daughter could have given a thought. No one visits here except a few old friends of the Baron's, who sometimes do us the honor of dining with us after a day's shooting with him. M. de la Tusette, for instance, who shares with him the lordship of the manor of Piedfourcha; M. de Verdache, one of our glass manufacturing nobles; M. de Cadarasse, too, who was formerly one of the rangers of the royal forests—all very excellent people, and of unexceptionable birth, I admit, but by no means agreeable members of society.'

"Whilst Madame de Malpeire was thus allaying my apprehensions, I happened to cast my eyes on a most exquisite oval frame, in which was stuck a most wretched English print of Clarissa Harlowe escaping from her father's house, which neither as to size or beauty fitted the magnificent specimen of carving which encircled it. Madame de Malpeire's glance had followed mine, and with her usual versatility she instantly changed the subject of discourse. 'Yes, I see,' she said, 'that you think it is doing too much honor to that stupid engraving to put it in that frame. I am quite of your opinion, but it is, however, my own doing, and you will understand my reasons when I tell you what led to it. You must know that I was so dreadfully bored here the first year of my marriage that I became positively ill. The Baron was looking out for something to amuse me. He happened to hear of an Italian painter, who was making the round of the neighboring chateaux seeking for employment. He took it into his head to send for him to make my picture, and at the same time he sent to Paris for a handsome frame and a box of colored crayons, for portraits in pastel are the only ones I like, and I would not on any account have had mine done in any other manner. The Italian did not arrive, however, for three or four months, and when at last he did come I was grown dreadfully thin, and so weak that I could hardly walk a step. However, to please the Baron I consented to have my likeness taken, but after the first sitting I was obliged to give it up. My health completely gave way, and I

did not leave my bed for six weeks. The first time I came out of my room he brought me here, and making me sit down in front of that frame, he said, 'Our Italian painter did not require to see you more than once in order to set to work. Look up, dear heart, and tell me if you do not recognize your own features in that face?' I positively shrieked, for the abominable wretch had actually painted me in oils, and besides that he had the beautiful idea of dressing me up like a Roman or a Turk, or I don't know what, with a yellow drapery around my waist, and on my head a sort of turban, and no powder. I told the Baron I could not bear to see myself in that dress, even in a picture, and that, with his permission, I would send that horrid daub into the lumber room. It was accordingly carried up-stairs, but the frame remained where it was, and Boinet bethought herself of sticking that print into it. I locked up the box of crayons, in the hope that some other painter might perhaps come this way, but we never see those foreign artists now, and so that affected Clarissa Harlowe still occupies my place.'

" 'Perhaps you would allow me,' I said, 'to try and take your likeness; I can draw a little.' 'No, no. I thank you very much, but it is too late now,' she answered with a sort of melancholy vivacity. 'It is at twenty, my daughter's age, that a woman should have her portrait taken; it is her picture I should like to see in that frame.' 'If she will sit to me,' I exclaimed, enchanted with the hint, 'I can begin it to-morrow.' 'Why not to-day?' cried Madame de Malpeire; 'we have only to let my daughter know;' and she invited me by a sign to follow her into the boudoir. Mlle. de Malpeire was standing reading near a little bookcase, the old Baillé d'Herbelay's, of course. When we came in she quickly threw down the volume, but without any attempt at concealing it. When her mother told her that I was going to take her portrait, she evinced neither satisfaction nor dissatisfaction, but carelessly twisting up her fair long curls, she answered, laconically, 'I am ready.' 'Not so fast, mademoiselle; not so fast,' cried Madame de Malpeire; 'I must have you dressed as a nymph, and your hair slightly powdered, and in it sky-blue bows.' 'Very well, mamma,' she answered, with a look of resignation. 'Go into your room with Boinet,' Madame de Malpeire continued, 'and while she dresses your hair I will get everything ready here.' I remained alone in the boudoir, and could not resist the temptation of ascertaining what book it was Mlle. de Malpeire had been reading. I found it was Rousseau's *Nouvelle Héloïse*. A sentence in the preface of that work flashed across my mind: 'The woman who will venture to read this book is as good as lost.' 'Thank Heaven,' I thought to myself, 'we have no St. Preux here.' I was too young, too thoughtless, too much in love, to make any more serious reflections on this discovery. I put back the volume in its place, only regretting that chance had happened to throw it in Mlle. de Malpeire's way.

"Madame de Malpeire, like all persons who are habitually idle, was wonderfully active when once she hit upon something to do. Under her superintendence the little room was transformed into a kind of studio, and she sent for the box of crayons, the sheets of vellum, and all the things which were to have been originally used by the Italian artist. Mlle. de Malpeire, in the dress and *coiffure* her mother had desired, looked on with indifference at all these preparations. When they were completed she said it was too late to begin that day—that I should not have time to sketch her portrait. 'You are right, my dear,' her mother replied; 'and, moreover, it is time for our *gâteau*. Ring the bell, that Boinet may send us up cakes and fruit.' The fruit Madame la Baronne spoke of was a plateful of those little yellow peaches which I ate this morning with so much relish. Mlle. Boinet took them up one after another on the point of a fork, and after peeling and cutting them in quarters with a silver knife, she poured upon them sugar and wine. Madame de Malpeire helped me to some of this compote, and said with a sigh: 'This is the only fruit which ripens here.' 'It is quite excellent,' I answered, with perfect sincerity. 'It is very kind of you to say so,' she replied; 'they would not be eat-

able but for the art Boinet possesses of improving their flavor with sugar and wine. She prepares cherries for me in the same way when it is the season for it. That woman is a perfect treasure. She has neat, handy ways of doing things which make her services invaluable. I wanted her to have married some peasant in the village, whom I could have made an upper servant after she had polished him up a little; but she could never make up her mind to marry one of those clownish fellows.'

'Really, mamma,' exclaimed Mlle. de Malpeire, with a sudden vivacity, 'it would have only been too great an honor for her. Those clownish fellows, as you call them, are free independent men, whereas her position is that of a menial.' 'O, good Heavens!' Madame de Malpeire exclaimed, 'what is the meaning of these fine phrases? Where have you learnt this nonsensical trash, my dear? Let me tell you that Mlle. Boinet's excellent conduct and the refinement of her manners have raised her long ago above what you call a menial condition. I beg to assure you that she would have lowered herself greatly in the social scale by marrying a man inferior to her in mind and education—one of those boorish, stupid peasants whom you call free independent men.'

Mlle. de Malpeire colored violently at this kind of reproof, and hung down her head with a look of embarrassment and ill-concealed anger. I was surprised at her seeming so annoyed at her mother's words, but my thoughts did not go any farther. I ought to have understood by that time that the education she had secretly given herself had created an impassable gulf between us. I ought to have been more alarmed at the ideas and feelings she sometimes expressed, and foreseen their ultimate results. Yes, it would have been well for her and for me if I had that day left the Castle of Malpeire, and given up all thoughts of this perverse but too captivating girl; it might have saved her from a terrible fate. But I remained, and her doom was sealed."

CHAPTER VI.

THE FEAST OF ST. LAZARE.

M. de Champanbert paused after he had uttered these last words, and looked up at the picture. After gazing for a little while sadly and intently at the lovely face, which seemed to listen to him with a smile, he went on:

"I took possession of my newly arranged studio, and in three or four days finished that portrait."

"And you signed it with your initials," added Dom Gérusac; "I have often noticed that there was an M. and a C. at the corner near the heading."

"How carefully you must have examined that anonymous picture!" M. de Champanbert replied; "yet it is by no means a *chef d'œuvre*."

"No, certainly not," my uncle answered with his usual simplicity.

"But it was an excellent likeness," the Marquis subjoined, "and was, therefore, of course reckoned perfect. I will not treat you, my dear Thomas, to a description of all the feelings of my infatuated heart during three or four days which were spent in contemplating that lovely face, and in striving to reproduce on paper the nearest possible resemblance of those beautiful features. The sitting generally lasted several hours, for the Baronne was in a state of restless impatience to see my work finished. As soon as she was up, she came to the boudoir, where I was already established, and immediately sent for her daughter. Mlle. de Malpeire then made her appearance, dressed as you see her there, with her hair arranged in that way. She walked leisurely into the room, and sitting down at a little distance from the table, drew herself up in her stiff corsage, fixing her eyes upon me with a defiant expression, crossed her beautiful arms on her chest, and remained immovable in the position I had prescribed.

"Madame de Malpeire, when I began to draw, used to cry

out with an amusing impatience, 'smile, my dear, smile then!' But in spite of the maternal injunctions, she sat on proud and silent, till by degrees the expression of her countenance underwent a change. A sort of dreamy reverie seemed to steal over her, which I would not for the world have interrupted, for then her features resumed a more natural expression, a soft light shone in the blue orbs of her matchless eyes, and sometimes she looked at me, but I felt it was unconsciously, with the enchanting smile I have reproduced in the portrait. Two or three times during these long sittings, I remained for a little while alone with her. Then her expression instantly altered; she turned her eyes away from me with a look of haughty reserve, which seemed meant to convey that any attempt at conversation would be disagreeable to her. But I was so desperately in love, and in consequence so obstinately sanguine, that these signs of indifference, and even aversion, did not destroy the hope that my love and my devoted attentions would end by softening that proud heart, and I began to think it would be as well, as her mother had said, to marry her in the meantime.

"The Baron did not know I was making his daughter's portrait. Madame de Malpeire intended it to be a surprise for him, and was keeping the secret with all the discretion she was capable of. It was not difficult, for he was out shooting all day, and in the evening he did not think of inquiring what we had been doing during his absence. When my *chef d'œuvre* was finished, I placed it in the frame and hung it up myself in the drawing-room, opposite to the arm-chair in which the Baron took his nap after supper. As soon as the sun had set that evening, Madame de Malpeire desired the shutters to be closed, and the lustre which hung from the ceiling to be lighted up, as well as the branch candlesticks over the chimney-piece. Mlle. Boinet had stripped the garden, in order to make up an enormous cipher of flowers and foliage, which she fastened above the frame. It was formed of two M's surrounded by a coronet. The clever creature had bethought herself that my Christian name was Maximin. 'What a charming idea!' Madame de Malpeire emphatically remarked. 'Do look, my dear, at that cipher.' 'Yes, it is my cipher,' Mlle. de Malpeire quickly said as if to protest against her mother's interpretation of the symbolic monogram. 'Those two M's mean Marie de Malpeire.'

"The Baron was coming home just at that minute. His wife went to meet him, and brought him in triumph to the door of the drawing-room. 'Oh, what a beautiful picture!' he exclaimed, when he saw his daughter's portrait. 'How like it is! how perfect!' Madame de Malpeire enjoyed his surprise for a little while, and then said, with a smile, 'You do not ask the name of the painter?' 'Ah, indeed, I ought to do so, my love; I am sure I owe him a great many thanks,' he good-naturedly replied. 'Here he is,' his wife said, taking me by the hand; 'it is modesty which prevents him coming forward.' The good old man embraced me most affectionately, and said, in a gay, light manner, but with a little emotion, 'Well, we make an exchange. I give you the original, and you leave me the copy.' At the same time, he turned towards his daughter, and held out his hand, as if to ask for her's, in order to place it in mine, but she drew back, and with her eyes bent on the ground, hid herself behind her mother. 'Well, you have my promise, and that is enough,' he added more seriously.

That night at supper he said to his wife, 'Have you forgotten, my dear, that to-morrow is the feast of St. Lazarus, the patron saint of the village?' 'Well, I certainly never thought of it,' she answered, in a careless tone. 'A great many people are already arrived,' the Baron subjoined. 'As I came home from shooting, I saw them all flocking this way, gipsies, horse-dealers, pedlars, and all the variety of tramps that pitch their tents on the ground of the fair the day before it opens. The folk from the low country are coming up in crowds, and when the inhabitants of the neighboring villages swarm here to-morrow, there will be an immense number of people gathered together. It used to be the custom,' he added, turning to me, 'for the wife or the daughter of the lord of the manor to open

the ball with one of the village lads. My wife did away with this practice, but my daughter chose to revive it last year, and danced with the peasants like her grandmother and her great-grandmother had done before her, but this year things must be managed differently. We shall go to the village only for Mass at the parish church.' 'You don't mean, sir, that we shall not be present at the games?' exclaimed Mlle. de Malpeire. 'No, my dear,' her father answered in a decided manner. 'Times are not what they used to be, and you cannot appear in a place where you might not perhaps meet with proper respect.'

'You are not really going to regret that rustic ball, I hope,' Madame de Malpeire said, in a tone of indulgent reproach. 'Charming partners, upon my words, those hot-faced perspiring fellows, dressed as in the heart of winter, in coats of green frieze, and short breeches of the same material; and, moreover, with worsted stockings, in their heavy clumsy shoes?' 'O, mamma, what do their clothes signify?' exclaimed Mlle. de Malpeire, in a tone of intense though suppressed irritation. 'There is nothing coarse about these men but their dress. The simplicity of their manners is perhaps preferable to the refinements of our politeness, and, in spite of the peculiarities which shock you so much, their society is endurable, I assure you.' 'Well, possibly so, in the open air,' the Baronne replied, with a little affected laugh.

"I remembered then the blue embroidered scarf, and turning to the Baron, I asked, 'Will the conqueror, then, not receive the prize from the hands of Mlle. de Malpeire?' 'He will come here for it after the sports are over,' he replied. 'Madame la Baronne will receive him and his companions in the hall down-stairs. This does not commit us to anything.' He led his wife back to the drawing-room. I remained a minute behind with Mlle. de Malpeire, and trembling with emotion, I whispered to her, 'To-morrow your mother will tell you what has been settled. My happiness depends upon your answer. I cannot be happy if I do not obtain your free consent.' She drew back, and looking me straight in the face, she said in a low voice, 'What! so soon!' 'Forgive me, forgive me,' I cried, terribly agitated. 'The excess of my love justifies—' 'Do you mean,' she coldly said, 'that you would marry me against my will?' My only answer was a gesture of despair and passion. 'You would really go so far as that!' she exclaimed indignantly. 'Very well. Time will show!' and she turned her back upon me.

"Early the next morning, Mlle. Boinet came to let me know it was time to go to church. I found Madame de Malpeire dressed as if to hear Mass at the King's chapel, in a gown of Indian satin, and three great feathers in her head-dress. Mlle. de Malpeire was also in greater toilette than usual. She had on a *deshabillé* of striped silk, and a little straw hat on her head adorned with ribbons, the long ends of which streamed down her back. When I went up to her to pay her my respects, she bowed in an indifferent absent manner, which took me by surprise. I expected to see her less composed. Her mother made me a confidential sign, and then whispered in my ear, 'I have not said anything to her yet. There is no hurry about it.'

"The road which descended to the village was a sort of staircase cut in the rock. Madame de Malpeire was carried down in a Sedan chair. The Baron took care of his daughter, and I walked with them. All the household followed; that is, about a dozen men and maid servants, with Choiset, the game-keeper, and Mlle. Boinet at their head.

"There was a crowd in front of the church. The peasants in their Sunday clothes stood in groups, conversing in a noisy manner under the shade of the twin elm-trees. Farther on in the open space, where the fair was held, on a kind of a natural bowling green, the mass of people was still more considerable. I observed that most of the young men wore in their button-holes, or in their hats, a bit of ribbon of the national colors, as they were then called. When the Baron and his family appeared, all eyes were directed towards them, and there was a moment of silence. The crowd made way for us to pass, and

some of the older then touched their hats, but there were few of them who showed that mark of respect. Notwithstanding the recent attacks on the privileges of the nobility, the seat of the lord of the manor still existed in the old parish church. It was a beautiful piece of oaken wood-work, with a very high back, surmounted by a canopy. The panels were elaborately carved, and each compartment bore the shield of the Malpeires, and their haughty motto, the Provencal words, *Fuero un degun*, 'No one except one.' As I went up the nave I observed against one of the pillars a picture worked in tapestry. It was an *ex voto*. Imperfect as was the execution, it was easy enough to recognize the scene it was intended to represent. A funeral procession was halting at the Pass of Malpeire; a coffin stood on the ledge of a rock, and a priest, with his hands upraised, was gazing on the young girl who had just lifted up her shroud. Madame de Malpeire saw that I was looking at that simple memorial, and with a sudden burst of feeling she said, glancing at her daughter, 'They were actually going to bury her alive!' 'And God restored her to you in a miraculous manner,' I replied, touched by her involuntary emotion. 'I suppose you had that picture made as a thanks-offering?' 'I worked it myself,' she answered. 'It took me a year to finish it.'

"The Baron seated himself in his usual place, his wife on one side of him and his daughter on the other. Pointing to a vacant seat by the side of the latter, he invited me to take it. The household knelt a little lower down on a carpet which was spread over the stone floor. We thus formed a separate group between the sanctuary and the nave, which was filled with the villagers and strangers. Our arrival had occasioned a little agitation amongst the crowd. When the Baronne had walked up the aisle, smiling in a condescending manner, her feathers waving to and fro, and her high-heeled shoes resounding on the pavement, every face had been turned towards her with a malevolent expression. As soon as we had taken our places in the manorial seat, these feelings of hostility assumed a more open character. Notwithstanding the sanctity of the place, murmurs rose amongst the congregation. At this unexpected demonstration, Madame de Malpeire, who was quietly reading in her prayer-book, looked up surprised, and said to her daughter, 'What do they want, I wonder?' 'That everybody should pray to God without distinction of rank,' Mlle. de Malpeire answered in an excited tone. The Baron was looking very pale, and scanned the crowd with a haughty and frowning countenance. Fortunately, the priest with his acolytes appeared at that moment, and when he went up to the altar the people at the lower end of the church knelt down in silence. About a dozen young men, however, advanced towards the chancel, genuflected as they passed before the altar, and then stood together side by side opposite the Baron's seat. He whispered to me, 'They have a right to stand there. From time immemorial the Abbat, that is, the prince of the young men, and his companions occupy the place on St. Lazarus' day.'

"These youths had all green sprigs in their hats, and a sort of scarf tied across the thick waistcoat which so much offended the Baronne's taste. Most of them were robust peasants, with sunburnt faces and athletic frames. The Abbat especially furnished a magnificent type of physical strength. His stature was colossal, and his regular features reminded me of the head of an ancient gladiator. This man's dress was somewhat different from that of the other peasants. Instead of worsted stockings he wore yellow leather gaiters, and in lieu of the obnoxious frieze waistcoat, a jacket of striped linen. I noticed all this in a vague, cursory manner. My anxiety was increasing as the moment approached for the publication of the banns of marriage, and I could hardly conceal the agitation with which I awaited the accomplishment of that formality. Madame de Malpeire seemed to have no misgivings, though she had not chosen to inform her daughter of what was about to take place. She looked at me from time to time with a smile, as if to congratulate me on my happiness. At last the priest, with a paper in his hand, read in a loud voice from the altar, in the midst of a profound silence: 'There is a promise of marriage between the very excellent and illustrious lord

Maximin de Monville, Count of Champaubert, and the very excellent and illustrious lady, Madeleine Marie de Malpeire.' Fresh murmurs rose in the body of the church, provoked this time by the sound of those titles and high-sounding appellations. I looked anxiously at Mlle. de Malpeire. Her countenance betrayed no agitation. She only looked very pale, and her hands trembled a little, though she tried to repress it. 'Do not agitate yourself, my love,' her mother affectionately whispered; 'there is no occasion to be surprised, and still less distressed.' 'I am perfectly calm,' she answered, with a faltering voice, and turning away her head.

"I saw nothing, I remarked nothing more, and yet I am sure that something must have passed there which ought to have opened my eyes and showed me I had a rival. As soon as Mass was over the Baron made way for me and said, 'Now that the announcement of your marriage has been publicly made, Monsieur le Comte, lead the way and give your hand to your betrothed.'

"I did so with a beating heart. Mlle. de Malpeire suffered me to lead her down the church. The crowd had already streamed out, and was waiting for us outside. The little band of peasants, at the head of which was the Abbat, came forward. He took off his hat and addressed the Baron in Provencal. 'What does he say?' whispered Madame de Malpeire in her daughter's ears. 'He invites us to be present at the games,' she coldly replied. 'At a distance, well and good,' the Baronne rejoined. 'I have ordered seats to be placed along the parapet; we can see from there everything that goes on as well as below. But we must invite that big fellow and his friends to come up to the castle to drink a glass of wine, and receive the scarf you have taken the trouble to embroider. It is of no use for me to speak to them in French. You had better explain the matter to them, my darling.' 'It is already done,' she answered. 'My father has just told him that you expect them this evening.' 'Then let us quickly get out of this mob,' exclaimed the Baronne, stepping into her chair; 'we shall be suffocated if we stay here.' We were, in fact, inconveniently thronged, the mob pressing upon us somewhat insolently. Still there was no absolute rudeness, no threatening expressions. 'I will go on first,' the Baron said; 'I leave you to take care of my daughter.' I took Mlle. de Malpeire's arm under mine to lead her through the crowd, but she abruptly disengaged it, and turning towards the Abbat, as if to place herself under his protection, she said to him, 'Go before us, Pinatel.' The colossus obeyed. He forced his way through the mob, jostling and thrusting everybody aside, and thus clearing a passage for us. As soon as we were out of the place, he turned round, and without saying a word went back to his companions.

"We walked on in silence towards the castle, Mlle. de Malpeire some way in advance of us, the Baron at my side with a gloomy, disturbed countenance. At last he said, 'You have seen the disposition of these people; they have all but insulted us. Who knows how far this will go? If the King does not provide a remedy, his nobles will be exposed to a conflict with the peasantry. In the meantime, I must take measures for our own security. We shall not go any more into the village.' 'I am quite of your opinion,' cried the Baronne, putting her head out of the sedan-chair. 'We shall remain at home, and our daughter shall be married in the chapel of the castle. Do you know Boinet heard them saying behind her that in all the other parishes the seats of the lords of the manor had been pulled down. You will be obliged, perhaps, to remove yours.' 'Never!' exclaimed the Baron. 'I gave up without hesitation all pecuniary privileges; toll rents, field rents, fees, weighings, fines on sales, and the like, all have been abolished, but never as long as I live will I renounce my honorary rights. Of these nothing but violence shall deprive me.'

"As we entered the castle I tried to speak to Mlle. de Malpeire, but with determined ingenuity she contrived to avoid it. In the afternoon, however, I succeeded in detaining her on the steps as we were going down into the garden, and said to her with great emotion, 'O, mademoiselle, cannot you forgive me my happiness? What can I do to soften your feelings towards

me? How can I make myself worthy of your regard? If you did but know how I love you, perhaps your heart would not be so slow to return my affection,' and as she hurried on without answering, I added, 'Do let me speak to you of my feelings. You cannot object to it now that you look upon me as your future husband.' 'You had better say the highest bidder for my hand,' she replied with a bitter sneer. I do not know why, but at that moment a sudden suspicion flashed across my mind. With a vague but violent feeling of jealousy I exclaimed, 'You care for somebody else. Who is it you prefer to me?' 'You will soon know,' she boldly replied, and without another word rushed into the garden."

CHAPTER VII.

MADemoiselle de Malpeire's Marriage.

"I GRIEVE to say that even after my short conversation with Mlle. de Malpeire on the steps of the parterre, I did not make up my mind to give her up. On the contrary, my love became selfish and tyrannical, and I felt resolved to assert my claim to her hand, in spite of the existence of a favored rival. So greatly did passion blind and mislead me, that the idea of a forced marriage no longer appeared to me as repugnant and odious as it used to do. The time for delay and hesitation was gone by, and I determined to speak to the Baron that very evening. We had only to draw up the contract on the following morning, and in three days I could be married to Mlle. de Malpeire. It was whilst I was sitting by the Baroness near the parapet, watching the games on the village green, that I turned over in my head these plans and resolutions.

"The scene below was somewhat confused. Almost everybody had left the place where the fair was held, and the crowd pressed tumultuously round an enclosure formed with ropes and stakes run into the ground. At one end of these lists, so to call them, stood a pole, at the top of which glistened in the rays of the setting sun a gigantic pewter dish. At the opposite extremity a drum and fife formed the most discordant orchestra ever inflicted on mortal ears. Mlle. de Malpeire was on the other side of her mother, and never took her eyes off that scene. I kept watching her, with feelings of jealousy, anger and tenderness. She tried to look composed, but the expression of her countenance and the feverish flush on her cheeks betrayed a secret agitation.

"'Look, my dear Count,' the Baroness said to me, 'the games are going to begin.'

"Two half-naked men entered the lists, and seized one another by the body. One of them was soon thrown down, and silently withdrew from the ring. The other man stood bolt upright, and awaited the next combatant, who, in his turn remained master of the field, and then was vanquished by another adversary. For more than an hour new wrestlers successively occupied the centre of the ring, and were one after another rolled in the dust, amidst the shouts of the mob, who greeted them with applause, or hissed and hooted at them, according to the more or less strength and activity they evinced.

"After two or three encounters had taken place, the Baroness turned to me, and said, with a slight yawn, 'It must be owned, this is a little monotonous, especially as it is perfectly well known beforehand who will be the conqueror. The Abbat is sure to end by throwing them all down, as he did last year,' 'The strength of that fellow Pinatel is extraordinary,' the Baron observed; 'and he is also a wonderful poacher. If he had belonged to the place, I should have made him the offer of Choiset's situation sometime hence, and in the meantime occupied him as a woodman.'

"A moment afterwards Madame de Malpeire yawned again, and exclaimed, 'This is decidedly very tedious. These fights with the fists are too tiresome. Let us take a turn in the parterre.' I think I have already mentioned that this parterre was a raised platform, supported by the rampart, and surrounded

with trellised walks, amongst which meandered a number of narrow paths, edged with box. This little miniature hanging garden of Babylon filled up all the space in front of the modern part of the castle, and some of the old structures had been smartened up and newly painted in accordance with these recent alterations. At one of the angles of this portion of the building, which was entirely devoted to Madame de Malpeire's apartments, was a little turret, jutting out beyond the wall and overhanging a precipice, the bottom of which was on a level with the plain. In old times this turret was called the watch-tower, and when there were wars or disturbances in the country, a sentinel was placed in a little lodge at the top of it, to give notice of the approach of hostile bands. A slated roof had been substituted for the watchman's sentry-box, and at the height of the first story a large window had been made, the balcony of which hung over a chasm full of briars and dark-colored mosses. Mlle. de Malpeire's room was in this tower. As we passed near it the Baroness stopped, and, pointing to the balcony with her gold-headed cane, she said to me: 'I cannot look out of that window without feeling giddy. My daughter's nerves are stronger than mine. I have often found her musing on a moonlight evening with her elbows resting on the edge of that swallow's nest.' I leant over the parapet to measure with my eyes the tremendous height of the wall, and satisfied myself that even if there had been a Romeo in the neighborhood, that Juliet's balcony was inaccessible.

"Shortly before sunset loud acclamations arose from the plain, and the pewter dish disappeared from the top of the pole. 'It is over,' the Baroness said, peeping through the sticks of her fan. 'The victor is proclaimed, and he is crossing the square with his train. They will be coming up here. Let us go in.' It soon became dark, but the peasants lighted pine branches, which they carried in their hands. The flickering light of their torches formed a curious moving illumination as they ascended the hill. From the windows of the drawing-room we saw parties of men parading about the village, with a drummer at their head, singing various patriotic songs, and a less numerous band of boys and girls dancing on the green. In a few minutes, Choiset, the game-keeper came in. 'The Abbat is arrived,' he hastily announced; 'there is a great crowd following him. I am come to take M. le Baron's orders.'

"'You will admit no one but the Abbat himself and his twelve companions,' answered the old nobleman; 'and if any of the others try to force their way in, you will do as I told you.' 'Come,' said the Baroness, smiling, 'let us go and give audience to these gallant shepherds. Your hand, M. le Baron. Come with us, my love,' she added, turning to her daughter. Mlle. de Malpeire followed them, holding in her hand the blue scarf unfolded. She looked very pale, and I saw her hands tremble.

"They all went down stairs. I did not follow them; the whole affair was disagreeable to me, and I had not meant to be present at the presentation of the scarf. I remained, therefore, alone in the drawing-room, standing near a window, and unconsciously gazing on the dark plain. There was no moon, and not a star was to be seen in the sky. The garden and everything beyond it was veiled in profound obscurity. The night wind moaned sadly through the trellised alleys. I leaned my head on my hands, and fell into a melancholy fit of musing, which gradually softened my resentful feeling. The kind of avowal which Mlle. de Malpeire had volunteered, as it were, to make to me, had created at first in my heart a paroxysm of jealousy and anger, which was almost like hatred. But by dint of turning over in my mind the cruel words she had uttered, I began to think that there was no occasion to attach any importance to them; that it was all an excuse and a subterfuge, a mere threat—that I had not, that I could not, have a rival. If I could be once persuaded of this, I felt I could easily forgive her coldness, endure her scorn. I was ready to fall at the feet of the haughty girl, and to tell her that I should always love, always be devoted to her, without insisting on a return, if such was her will—her whim. As I was indulging in these alternate moods of tenderness and anger, I thought I perceived

a figure passing slowly under the window, keeping close to the wall, like some one feeling his way in the dark. Though there was nothing extraordinary in this, my attention was roused, and I followed with my eyes the indistinct form for some time, but the obscurity was so great that it disappeared without my having been able to discern which way it had gone. A moment afterwards Madame de Malpeire's little dog got up and growled. "I turned round; the door of the boudoir which had served me as a studio was ajar. I fancied I heard the sound of a light stealthy footstep on the creaking boards. The impression was so strong, that I called out, 'Who is there?' There was no answer. I took a candle and went into the boudoir; the little spaniel followed me, barking between my legs. The door to the parterre was open. This was often the case these summer evenings. No one was to be seen, but I fancied I heard the sound of receding footsteps. I concluded that some of the servants had passed that way into the garden, and returned to the drawing room. About half an hour afterwards Madame Malpeire came in and threw herself on the sofa, exclaiming, 'I am quite exhausted. I have been obliged to rest some time on my way up in Boinet's room. I do not know that I ever laughed so much in my life. I think it is that which has tired me so much.'

'Was the reception so very amusing then?' I asked. 'O, you shall hear all about it,' exclaimed the good lady, seized with a fresh fit of laughter. 'Just picture to yourself. The Abbat and his *cortège* were waiting in the green hall, with their hats off and very respectful, all as it should be. When my daughter came forward, the big fellow went down on his knees in a most gallant fashion to receive the scarf. She stooped over him, and passed it over his chest, whilst the others applauded, making a tremendous noise. At last, when silence was restored, the Abbat stood up and addressed to me a little speech, which gave me time to look at him. Upon my word that man is a giant. I do not think my feathers reached as high as his elbow. When he had finished his harangue, I turned to the Baron and said, 'Monseigneur, may I beg you to make my acknowledgments to that young man. Not knowing the language of the country, I have not been able to understand his speech, but I am not the less delighted with his sentiments.' 'Why, good gracious, madame,' the Baron exclaimed, 'he spoke to you in French!'

" 'This tickled my fancy so much that I was seized with a fit of laughter which obliged me to hide my face with my fan, and I was at least a quarter of an hour recovering myself. But it all passed off very well, I think. Wine and liquors were plentifully served out to these good people. They drank our healths, I don't know how many times, and are gone away quite satisfied, I presume. But the whole affair has been dreadfully fatiguing. As to my daughter, she is quite knocked up by the exertions of the day, and has asked my leave not to appear at supper. She has probably retired to rest by this time. For my part, I feel sufficiently refreshed not only to keep you and the Baron company at supper, but to play, if you are so disposed, our usual game at piquet afterwards.'

"The Baron then joined us, and said, 'There is an immense number of people on the road. They seem to be coming here, but they certainly will not come in. We can sleep in perfect quiet; I have ordered the draw-bridge to be taken up.' 'O,' exclaimed his wife, in a jesting manner, 'then we are all your prisoners. Nobody can go in and out without your leave.'

"We went to supper. I thought, in spite of all his efforts to appear unconcerned, that the Baron was somewhat anxious about the state of things. He fell, however, asleep as usual in his arm-chair, and Madame de Malpeire and I began one of those interminable games at cards which she often liked to prolong beyond midnight.

"At about eleven o'clock Mlle. Boinet ran in, looking terrified. 'I don't know what is going on,' she said; 'there is a great tumult outside. From this room nothing is heard, but if M. le Baron will go down into the court, perhaps he can find out what all this noise is about.' 'I daresay they have come to give us a serenade,' Madame de Malpeire said, quietly shuf-

fling the cards. 'I shall go down and see,' the Baron cried, starting up out of his sleep, 'Don't move, Champanbert; it is not worth while to interrupt your game.' He had hardly left us when the bells of the parish church began to ring. 'It is the tocsin,' I exclaimed. 'Then I suppose a fire has broken out somewhere,' Madame de Malpeire answered. 'It is a frequent occurrence here, where the houses are all built of wood and thatched with straw. On these *fête* days there is always the beginning of a conflagration somewhere or other, because in each cottage they light great fires for the frying with oil which goes on at a great rate on these occasions.' 'In that case,' I replied, 'we ought to see the flames from this window,' and I went to look out. It was as dark as possible, and the air felt heavy and sultry. It seemed as if a storm was gathering on the mountain. It was impossible to discern the position of the village, except by the mournful sound of the alarm bell, which fell on the ear with an ominous significance. I could see nothing in the thick darkness, except a multitude of lights moving in the same direction. These were the pine-wood torches carried by the peasantry. They were evidently advancing towards the castle in great numbers, and I was watching this procession with some anxiety when the Baron rushed into the room with a gun in his hand, one of those heavy muskets formerly used in sieges. 'It is a regular sedition, an attack with armed force,' he said, with a mixture of self-possession and anger. 'There are four or five hundred of them yelling and hooting on the other side of the moat in front of the gate.' But what do they want, I wonder?' the Baronne said, without much distressing herself. 'Who knows,' he replied. 'Choiset went to the wicket to speak to them, but they only shouted more furiously, and instead of stating their grievances, if they have any, they kept screaming, 'The Abbat, the Abbat!' just as if we had kept him a prisoner. Some of them have guns, but the greater number are armed only with pickaxes and ploughshares. There is no danger of them taking us by storm. I am only afraid of one thing, which is that it should occur to them to surprise us on this side by the postern gate.' 'Would that be possible?' asked the Baronne, beginning to take the alarm. He nodded affirmatively, and exclaimed with an oath: 'But I undertake to defend that entrance. The first man that appears I shoot down as a dog, and in like manner as many as shall follow, one by one.' 'O my God, my God!' cried his wife, lifting up her hands, 'and my daughter?' 'You must bring her here,' the Baron replied. 'It is from the balcony of her room that I must watch the postern gate.' 'Have you any directions to give me?' I asked. 'Come with me,' he briefly replied.

"Madame de Malpeire took a candle, and we followed her along the passage which led to her daughter's room. 'She must be fast asleep,' she said, 'and her door is always locked inside, but I have my master-key in my pocket. I often go in for a moment to look at her sleeping.' She opened the door, and at a glance I took in the principal features of the room. The bed, which had no canopy, was covered with a white counterpane. A large woollen curtain was drawn before the window. Over the mantelpiece, which faced the door, there was an old looking-glass, and at its foot the little figure the Baron had found in his game-bag. At the same time I perceived that Mlle. de Malpeire was not in her apartment. 'She is not here!' exclaimed the Baronne. 'What on earth has become of her?'

"My blood ran cold at these words. I remembered the figure I had seen gliding under the window, the light step I had heard in the boudoir, the strange emotion I had felt, the threat implied in the words, which had been ringing in my ears for the last few hours, 'You shall soon know.' Then, like a flash of lightning, passed through my mind the thought of what the Baron had said of the cries of the mob clamoring for the Abbat. A cold sweat started on my brow. I felt paralyzed from head to foot, and whilst a hasty search was made all over the castle for Mlle. de Malpeire, I stood rooted to the spot, feeling a horrible certainty that I should never see her again. The Baron came back, looking as pale as death. 'Sh:

'has been carried off,' he said in a hoarse voice. 'We must rescue her, or die.' 'I follow you,' I cried, but with despair in my heart. The words had scarcely passed my lips when my eyes fell on a letter, which was lying on a table in a corner of the room. I pointed it out to Madame de Malpeire, who seized it and exclaimed, 'Read, Monsieur, read. It is my daughter's handwriting; it is directed to you.'

'The Baron opened the letter, and an appalling change came over his face. He read it to the end, gave it into my hand, staggered, and fell heavily on the floor. His wife knelt by him and called wildly for help. The servants came rushing in. By the time he recovered his senses I had read these words:

'SIR:—The moment has come when everything must be known, when the secrets of my heart must be revealed. I have given my love, I have pledged my hand to a man who, according to the ideas of the world, is not my equal. I love him because he possesses all the virtues of his humble condition, truthfulness, honesty, morality, and simplicity. I am not afraid of poverty with him; his hardy frame is inured to labor. He will share with me the bread earned by the sweat of his brow. If I fly with him to the honorable shelter of his virtuous parents' roof, it is because an odious tyrannical despotism has driven me to this extremity. It is to escape the horrible misery of being forced into a marriage I abhor. On that account I claimed his protection and placed myself under his care. Do not think that you can drag me from the refuge I have chosen. Thousands of strong arms and brave hearts will encircle the peasant's bride, and save the noble's daughter from the tyranny which would constrain her to wed a man she does not love. If you would save my honor, if you would secure for the child you once called your own, though now you may curse and disown her, an unblemished name, send me your written consent to my marriage with François Pinatel, that I may become in the eyes of the world the lawful wife of the man with whom I have not feared to fly in the dead of night, to whom I shall have pledged my faith in the presence of a multitude, and whom I will never forsake in life or in death. I cannot expect that you, sir, and my poor mother will forgive me now, but the day will come when you will do so.'

'The Baron turned towards me with a calmness more fearful than the most violent burst of passion, and said, 'She must marry that man. I shall send my written consent, and when that paper is signed and gone, then I shall be childless, and forget that I ever had a daughter.' After a pause he added, in a tone which even at this distance of time I cannot call to mind without shuddering, 'Cursed be the day when she was born. Cursed be the day when God in His anger raised her from amongst the dead! Accursed be her life in this world and in the—' 'O, do not say in the next,' cried the wretched mother, putting her hand over his mouth. She too had read the letter, and wringing her hands, she kept repeating, 'My girl is mad; my poor girl is gone out of her mind.'

'What a terrible night we went through! Everything in me seemed crushed and annihilated. Transports of rage shook me to pieces at one moment, and vague feelings of remorse and pity tortured me the next. The Baron, unable to endure the cries of his wife, who was falling every moment into hysterics, followed me to my room. His grief was gloomy and silent. He walked up and down the room in a restless manner, and sometimes went to the window, as if to breathe. Every noise outside the castle had subsided; evidently the popular excitement was allayed by some unexpected circumstance.

The peasants were no longer clamoring before the entrance gate.

'Between twelve and one o'clock Choiset came into the room, and said, with tears in his eyes, 'Forgive me, Monsieur le Baron, if I venture to disturb you, but Madame la Baronne has had a long fainting fit. We were almost afraid she would die, but now she is a little better and has gone into her room. She asks to see you and Monsieur le Comte.'

'We went down stairs together. As soon as she saw us, Madame de Malpeire threw herself on her knees before her husband, and in a voice broken by sobs cried out, 'Monsieur, I cannot, I will not abandon her. You must take pity on that poor, deluded child. You must let me go to her; it is my duty, it is my right. I must save her from that horrible wretch. She will soon repent of her fault; then I shall hide her in some convent, and shut myself up with her. Religion bids us be merciful. It teaches us that the greatest offences can be expiated by repentance.'

'"Repentance can win forgiveness at God's hands," the Baron replied, 'but it cannot wipe away shame. Our name and our house cannot brook disgrace.'

'Long and vainly the poor woman pleaded in accents of vehement grief, which thrilled through my own bruised and miserable heart. The Baron continued unmoved. 'Nothing,' he said, 'can efface this shame or redeem the past. There is no option, no possible course but one. The unfortunate girl has chosen her lot and she must abide by it. She must marry the man she has eloped with, and be to us as if she had never existed.'

'Thus we passed the night, and the dawning light found us sitting together in the same place, pale, heart-broken, utterly wretched. Early in the morning the Baron wrote and sent his consent to his daughter's marriage. As she was not yet of age it could not otherwise have taken place.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE EMIGRES.

THE violent agitation I had gone through, and the struggles I had made not to give way to the excess of my grief before Mlle. de Malpeire's parents, brought on a state of physical suffering and mental prostration which occasioned great anxiety to those about me, and gave them reason to apprehend that I was seriously ill. Alarming symptoms soon showed themselves, and on the following day the doctor pronounced me to be at death's door. I have preserved only a confused recollection of what took place whilst I was lying in bed with a burning fever and often light-headed. The only thing I distinctly recollect is being haunted by the same continued hallucination. I kept fancying myself a child who had just died, and that I was placed in a coffin and carried along accompanied by funeral chants. The procession stopped at the Pass of Malpeire, and then I opened my eyes, lifted up my shroud, and gazed on the blue sky. This feeling of being dead and coming to life again was constantly re-occurring in my excited imagination, and I passed alternately from a state of physical prostration to one of violent excitement. At last, however, nature triumphed. I sat up one day, looked about me, and saw a woman sitting by my bed-side. It was Madame de Malpeire, but I did not know her again at first, for she wore neither patches or rouge. She had never left me day or night, and certainly I owed my life, under God, to the devoted care of her husband and herself. My illness had lasted six weeks, and the doctor, who came from D—, had often declared that he did not expect me to live through the night. The doctor was a sharp, clever little old man. He had not been deceived as to the cause of my illness, and as soon as he perceived that I was beginning to recover consciousness and memory, he said to me before Madame de Malpeire, 'The air of these mountains is too keen for my patient. Moreover, we must bear in mind that the winter here lasts for eight months consecutively, and that it is likely the snow will soon begin to fall and to make the roads impassable. My opinion is, that M. de Champanbert ought at once to set off. Though he is very weak, I am not afraid of the journey for him. If he cannot ride, nothing will be easier than to carry him in a litter.' I moved in a restless manner, and moaned. The effort I had made to sit up had been too much for my feeble strength, and my thoughts began to wander again. 'Yes, doctor,' I murmured, 'you will

come with me. We shall rest on the snow at the Pass of Malpeire, and you will leave me there.' 'No, no; we shall go on further,' he hastened to reply. 'You will go to your father, who is expecting you.' 'My father!' I said, suddenly struck with a new thought. 'Does he know that I am ill? Has he written?' Madame de Malpeire looked anxiously at the doctor, as if uncertain what answer to give. 'Tell him everything, madame,' he replied. 'Speak to him of the letter M. le Baron has received.' 'A few lines only,' she said, bending over me. 'A few lines written by your father himself. He is quite well and in a place of safety; but terrible things have happened.' The Baron came in at that moment and it was he who gave me an account of the horrible days, the 5th and 6th of October. My father had taken part in all that then took place. After accompanying the royal family of Paris, subsequently to their unhappy attempt at flight, he had gone home only a few hours, and on the following day went into voluntary exile. He had emigrated, and it was at Turin he was expecting me to join him.

"The doctor hoped that these terrible tidings would serve to divert the current of my thoughts from the one besetting idea which was destroying me. And it did so happen that the shock which this intelligence gave me turned away my attention from my own sufferings, and gave me a sudden energy. I raised myself a little in the bed, and, leaning my elbow on the pillow, listened to the accounts in the public papers, which the Baron had received at the same time as my father's letter, and which he read aloud to me. The description of the horrible scenes of which they gave the details absorbed all my attention, and for a quarter of an hour I forgot where I was, and the havoc which my unfortunate passion had made in my whole being. I forgot Mlle. de Malpeire. But before the Baron had finished reading, my eyes unfortunately fell on a little green branch, the leaves of which showed themselves against one of the window-panes. It was a sprig of periwinkle that Mlle. de Malpeire had stuck into her sash one afternoon, and which I had taken possession of when she threw it away, faded and broken, into a corner of the dining-room. The poor slip had taken root, and its light green leaves were beginning to rise above the edge of the flower-pot in which I had placed it, like some rare plant. Instantly, my throbbing head fell back on the pillow, and I sank into a bitter train of thought. The Baron read on, but it was no longer what I heard which made my blood boil with indignation or filled my eyes with tears. The old doctor perceived this sudden change, and said in a decided manner, 'Well, sir, we must be off to-morrow.'

"That same evening, Madame de Malpeire was sitting alone by my bedside. I hardly know with what kind of expression I looked at her, as I thought of one whose name I could not utter, but the poor woman burst into tears, and said, in a low voice, 'I mourn over her as if she were dead.' No other explanation took place between us. The wound in my heart was so sore and so deep that I was afraid of increasing my sufferings by touching upon it. I felt that there were things I could not hear mentioned and live.

"At about twelve o'clock that night, the Baron and his wife withdrew, after having affectionately squeezed my hand. Mlle. Boinet lingered for a moment in my room, and wished me good-night with a sorrowful expression, not at all usual to her. 'Good-night,' I said, '*du revoir* tomorrow.' She put her handkerchief to her eyes, and went out without speaking. I remained alone with the maid-servant, who was to sit up with me that night. Hitherto the Baron had slept in my room, not choosing to rely on any one but himself for the minute watching my dangerous illness required. The stout, good-natured girl established herself close to my bedside, with her hands folded under her handkerchief. As I did not fall to sleep immediately, she began in her *patois* a sort of unintelligible soliloquy. I gathered from it, however, that she was lamenting over my departure and that of her master and mistress. The monotonous sound of her voice ended by lulling me to rest. My weary, burning eyes at last closed themselves, and for the first time I slept soundly for several consecutive hours.

"When I awoke the following morning it was broad daylight and the exhilarating rays of the rising sun made their way into every part of my room, the doors and windows of which were wide open. The doctor was already, standing by the side of my bed. 'Come, come,' he said, in a cheerful manner, 'you are much better. We must take advantage of this beautiful day, and start in an hour.' I suffered myself to be dressed as a child, and leaning on the arm of this kind man I tried to walk a few steps, but I was so weak I could not get as far as the door. 'Never mind,' he said, encouragingly, as he led me back to my arm-chair. 'I have ordered a good litter to be got ready, with thick curtains, and you will be very comfortable. It is at the bottom of the stairs. If you cannot walk, we shall carry you down.' 'I must first take leave of the Baron and Madame de Malpeire,' I said, with a choking sensation in my throat. He answered, 'They have spared you the pain of that parting. It would have been an additional trial, which you are not in a state to bear. For several days everything has been prepared for their departure. They only waited till you could be pronounced out of danger, and this very night they have left the castle.' 'For any long time?' I asked, quite startled at this information. 'Most likely for ever,' he sadly replied. 'They emigrate.'

"I was carried down to the litter almost fainting, and allowed myself to be conveyed away without asking where I was going, without casting one look behind me. The doctor accompanied me on horseback. When we arrived at the Pass of Malpeire he dismounted and opened the curtains of my litter. The open air had revived me. I raised my head and gazed on the melancholy view. The lengthening shadows of the rock had already reached the confines of the gorge. The torrent was brawling in its deep bed, and the yellow autumnal leaves strewing the path. A little bird hopped on the stone where Mlle. de Malpeire's coffin had rested, and its joyful twitter mingled with the roaring noise of the imprisoned waters. I hid my face in my hands with a low moan. The doctor bent over me and anxiously inquired how I felt. I pressed his hand, which had taken hold of mine, and made a sign to him to close the curtains. The sight of that place made me feel faint and giddy. My head reeled, and I was seized with a wild desire to throw myself into the abyss and end my life beneath the cold waves of that foaming stream. This sort of delirium ceased as we began to descend the mountain on the other side, when I felt the softer air blowing in my face, and the southern sun warming my benumbed limbs. It was thus I departed from a spot where, in a short space of time, I had enjoyed the most transporting dream of happiness and suffered the most severe pangs that the human heart can undergo.

"Eight days afterwards I arrived at Turin, where I found my father. The doctor, who had accompanied me so far, was then obliged at once to return to the little town where he lived. The separation affected me, for I had become attached to him as to a friend whose skill and penetration had been the means of saving my life. Another absurd, strange feeling, which I would hardly acknowledge to myself, made me also regret his departure. He knew Mlle. de Malpeire; he could have talked to me of her. Just before he went away I had a weak return of passionate tenderness, and taking him apart, I said, in a faltering voice: 'Who knows what is the fate of that unhappy girl? I implore you to make some inquiries about her. Perhaps she may have changed her mind at the last moment, and left that man. What, in that case, would become of her? Her parents have disowned and cast her off. There would be no one to lend her a helping hand, should she wish to retrace her steps. This thought makes me miserable. I would give my life to save her—to take her away from that man.' The doctor looked at me with a compassionate expression of countenance, and said briefly: 'Believe me—forget her. It is unhappy; she has the fate she chose for herself.'

"My father did not put any questions to me, and I said nothing to him. By a kind of tacit agreement we avoided every allusion to the fatal project of marriage which took me to the Castle de Malpeire and to the time I spent there. Once,

however, my father broke through that silence. It was at the end of the year 1792. We had just arrived at Ostend, where a great number of *émigrés* were preparing, like me, to cross over to England, but I did not seek them out, and whilst my father went to visit some old friends I remained alone at the hotel. I remember that the day was closing in, and the intensely melancholy feeling with which I watched the snow-flakes slowly falling and whitening the roofs of the neighboring houses, the high-pointed gables of which stood out in dark relief against the pale gray sky. My father came in with a sorrowful countenance, and seated himself by the fire without speaking. This made me feel anxious, for at that time life was made up of incessant fears, and the event generally more than justified the worst apprehensions. 'Any news from France?' I asked, trembling at what the answer might be. My father shook his head, and with a manner of great depression said: 'I have just heard of the death of an old friend. You know him, Maximin, and although it was under very painful circumstances that your intimacy ended, I am sure you will feel his death very much.' 'You mean that the Baron de Malpeire is dead,' I exclaimed. 'Yes, he was carried off suddenly within the last few days,' my father answered. 'He had been living here some time in a state bordering on destitution.' 'And Madame de Malpeire?' I asked. 'Was she with him? Have you seen her?' Heshook his head sadly. 'What, is she, too, dead?' I cried. 'She died a good while ago of a broken heart, I think,' my father said in a low voice. 'The Baron had no one with him in his last moments except a poor servant of his wife's, who had latterly supported him by her work. When I heard all this I tried to find her out. I should have liked to have done something for that faithful creature, but she is gone; she went back to France.'

'We sat on some time in silence. At last I said to my father—'And Mlle. de Malpeire—do you know what has become of her?' He hesitated for a moment, and then replied in a way that seemed intended to stop any farther questions, 'the family of Malpeire is now quite extinct.'

'From that day to this I never uttered again Mlle. de Malpeire's name and my father may have thought that I had forgotten her, but it was not so. The remembrance of that first and only affection dwelt in my heart through all the years of my youth, and, I am almost ashamed to add, even in a more advanced period of life, stood in the way of my marrying. And now I cannot look at that picture without emotion. The sight of it makes my poor old heart thrill as it used to do years ago. The brightest and the most terrible days I have known rise again before me.'

CHAPTER IX.

THE HOME OF THE PINATELS.

M. de Champaubert leant his elbow on the table, sighed deeply, and pouring out a glass of sherry, drank it off. My uncle, who had with difficulty followed all these romantic metaphysics, ejaculated, "You were really very unfortunate in your first love." As to me, my heart was bursting with indignation. I could not take my eyes off Mlle. de Malpeire's picture, and when the Marquis had finished his story I murmured, with a kind of scornful rage, "That Abbat she was so fond of must be by this time a horrid wrinkled old peasant, bent half-double, I daresay, and dressed in tattered clothes. I should like to see him now."

Whilst M. de Champaubert had been speaking Babelou had looked in at the door more than once. When his narrative came to an end she glided into the room, and going up to the back of my uncle's arm-chair, she whispered in his ear that M. le Curé was come, and asked for a bed, as he was in the habit of doing now and then.

"By all means," cried Dom Gêrusac; "he is most welcome. Where is he?"

"In the kitchen drying his cassock." Babelou replied,

"There was a heavy shower just now, and it soaked through and through."

The rain was indeed streaming down the window panes, and the temperature in the house had become sensibly colder.

"Throw some fagots on the fire," Dom Gêrusac said; "we are freezing here. And get us some coffee; you know M. le Curé likes it very hot."

"My dear Marquis," he added, "you will let me introduce to you the Abbé Lambert, a worthy priest, who has been for fifteen years Curé of Malpeire."

"I shall be very glad to make his acquaintance," the Marquis eagerly answered. And whilst my uncle went to look after his new guest, he said to me, "M. le Curé must, I think, know something as to the fate of the family of Malpeire. He must have heard people talk about them and their misfortunes. Have you ever asked any questions on the subject?"

"Yes, I have, monseigneur," I answered, getting very red, "but he seemed to know nothing about it. Perhaps it was out of a feeling of charity, and because he wished people to forget Mlle. de Malpeire's disgraceful history."

The Abbé Lambert came in with my uncle. His old cassock was still very damp, and the marks which his heavy shoes left on the floor showed that he had been trudging on foot in roads full of clayey mud. But he was in nowise ashamed of his poor appearance, and it was in a manner equally free from embarrassment or familiarity that he returned the greeting of our distinguished guest, who received the old village priest with as much respect as if he had been a dignitary of the Church, made way for him by his side close to the fire, and stirred up the blaze of the fagots, in order that the poor worn-out cassock might be effectually dried.

"My dear Curé, I am delighted that your flock is scattered over these mountains and valleys," said Dom Gêrusac with a smile. We should not have had the pleasure of seeing you to-night if you had not some parishioners to visit in this neighborhood."

"Yes, indeed," he replied, with somewhat of sadness in his tone. "It is a case requiring my ministry that brought me here to-night—a pressing sick call,—and I was afraid of being too late. It is a long walk from Malpeire to here, and in this stormy weather the torrents may swell at any moment so as to impede the way."

"After the Abbé Lambert had dried his clothes and drank a cup of coffee, M. le Champaubert began discreetly to sound him as to the time of his arrival in those parts, and the reports he might have happened to hear concerning the former lords of the soil. The Abbé Lambert seemed aware of the interest which prompted M. le Champaubert to make these inquiries, and he spared him the necessity of more direct questioning by saying, in a grave, sad voice:

"When I came here, about sixteen years ago, the family of Malpeire was almost forgotten. Even the melancholy event which preceded their departure was hardly alluded to."

"But you know of it!" exclaimed the Marquis. "You had heard of the only daughter of the late Baron, Mlle. de Malpeire?"

The old priest raised his eyes and hands to heaven, and said, in an earnest and impressive manner, "May God have mercy on the soul of that poor woman! And you must also forgive her; she has atoned for her guilt by severe sufferings—"

"You have been yourself acquainted with Mlle. de Malpeire," interrupted M. de Champaubert, greatly agitated; "you can tell me what has been the end of her unhappy life."

"It is a shocking history," murmured the Abbé Lambert, shaking his head, as if beginning to hesitate about recalling that painful remembrance. But the Marquis would take no denial, and he then said, "I little thought where and in what company I should relate the history of that poor sinner. God, in his mysterious providence, has, I suppose, thus ordained it." He paused for a moment or two, and then went on:

"At the time of Mlle. de Malpeire's elopement, I was Curé

of St. C——, a little village of Provence, in the diocese of Aix. François Pinatel's family lived in that place. He went by the name of the Abbat, because in all the village *fêtes* he was leader or prince of the young men. The Pinatels belonged to that old race of peasantry which for three or four hundred years have been in possession from father to son of a piece of ground of their own, and cultivated it themselves. The mother, an honest, hard-working woman, with a sharp eye after profits and gain, managed the household. She married her eldest son to a girl who had for her portion a plot of ground worth about a thousand crowns, and she lived in very comfortable terms with her daughter-in-law. She came one day to tell me the news of her second son's marriage with Mlle. de Malpeire. The widow Pinatel was by no means dazzled by the noble alliance. 'Everything is not gold that glitters,' she said. 'Not a word had been breathed about a marriage portion; and as the parents will not see or speak to the girl, it is most likely they will disinherit her. It is not in any way a marriage that suits us. What shall we do at home with this fine young lady? Does she think we are going to be her humble servants? I can tell her it will be no such thing. And what a figure she will look amongst us in her smart gowns? They will laugh at us in the village, and I shall be almost ashamed of being seen with her. For my part, I have no opinion of those handsome women. They are always thinking of their faces and their dress. There is not a bit of use in them. I am certain my eldest son, when he comes home, will be out of sorts about this marriage. But it is of no good talking. François brought her to the farm, and there was nothing for it but to get them married. But I wish with all my heart—that I do—that this mademoiselle had never darkened our doors.' I did all I could to make her look on her son's marriage in a different light, and to persuade her to welcome with a more Christian spirit the young stranger who had become a member of her family. But though a good woman as the world goes, Madame Pinatel had none of the religious principles which would have made her susceptible of the sort of feelings I tried to instil into her, and all my efforts were useless.

"Just at that time I was summoned to Aix by the Bishop for a work which had been begun the year before, and which he wished me to finish under his eyes. I was absent from my parish about two months, and it was near Christmas when I came home. I arrived late one evening, having walked part of the way, and as a cold, drizzling rain was beginning to fall, I hastened towards the dwelling-place of the Pinatels, which stood on the roadside, about a mile from the village. Their house was a large, ill-constructed building, the walls of which had never been plastered. Properly speaking, it had neither sides or front. The windows seemed to have been made here and there without any definite plan, and were without panes or blinds. The entrance door opened upon a sort of yard, encumbered with rubbish, piles of brushwood, and heaps of manure. There was not a tree about the house, or the least appearance of a garden. In summer a burning sun turned the outside of this habitation into a furnace, and in the winter the icy mistral blew in unopposed through the rotten boards of the old outside shutters. It was very dark, and as I was crossing the yard, feeling my way with a stick, I heard somebody before me exclaiming: 'François, is that you at last?' I advanced and named myself, upon which the person who had spoken turned abruptly round towards the house and disappeared. I pushed open the door, which stood ajar, and, passing through the stable, entered the room where the family usually sat. It was a tolerably long apartment, but so dark and smoky that at first it was difficult to discern anything in it. The widow Pinatel's bed was in one corner, screened from sight by curtains of yellow serge. Her great wooden cupboard—always carefully locked up—stood opposite to three or four shelves, upon which the crockery and the saucepans were placed in grand array. The wall was adorned with the pewter dishes won by the Abbat, and some of the household provisions were always hanging against it.

"When I walked in, the family was sitting round a table

upon which was lying a large heap of wheat. The grains were being sifted one by one for the purpose of removing the mildew, which is apt to spoil the flour. This occupation was carried on by the dim light of a snuffy lamp, and they all applied themselves, to the ant-like labor with extraordinary activity. When I appeared, Madame Pinatel got up and said, 'O dear, you have had to cross the stable without a light, M. le Curé. We never heard you coming. You found the door opened, then?' 'There was somebody in the yard,' I replied; 'I think it was your new daughter-in-law looking out for her husband.' 'The widow shrugged her shoulders, and the eldest son muttered between his teeth, 'In that case she is likely to spend the night out of doors.' 'Is François gone up to the mountain?' I asked, thinking it possible that he might have been to Malpeire, where great damage had been done after the Baron's departure. 'What business would he have there replied the widow; 'he is gone in another direction. You see, M. le Curé, he is a lad that can never stay long together at home. He is gone to amuse himself at the fair at Apt.' I sat down in the post of honor, under the projecting chimney-piece. Two small logs were slowly burning on the hearth, and though the hour of supper was past, an enormous iron pot was still simmering amidst the ashes. The 'The Provencal peasants' idea of politeness is to take upon themselves the whole burden of conversation, so that the visitors should not be at the trouble of answering. The eldest Pinatel accordingly began to descant upon the drought, which had been unfavorable for the sowing, and on the extraordinary size of two fat pigs which he had sold at the last fair at St. C——. Whilst he was giving me every kind of detail on the subject, his young sister-in-law silently slipped into the room and seated herself in the corner of the chimney opposite to me; her clothes were wet, and she was shivering with cold. 'Do not leave, another time, the door open when you go out in the evening, daughter-in-law,' the widow Pinatel said to her in a sharp tone of voice. 'How can I come in again if I shut it behind me?' she replied with a scowl on her face. No one took any further notice of her. The eldest son went on with his account of the sale of pigs. The other brothers had also their say in the matter, and an animated discussion arose as to the size and weight of the animals. In the meantime I was looking at the young wife with a mixture of curiosity and compassion. She was dressed like Madame Pinatel, in a brown drugged petticoat, and her cap of printed calico tied under her chin entirely concealed her hair. The white smoothness of her face was so remarkable that it almost seemed made of marble. She made up the fire a little, shivering all the time in her wet clothes, and holding her head down, as if afraid that I should speak to her. Seeing this was the case, I did not say a word, and even took care not to look at her any more. But I threw into the hearth some logs that were lying near me, and moved aside the iron pot that she might put her feet on the ashes. When she had warmed herself, she leant back against the wall with her arms crossed over her chest, and closed her eyes like a person who dozes overpowered by fatigue. The rain continued to fall, and I staid on till late in the evening. During all that time the young woman never moved, or opened her eyes. At last, just as I was going away, thinking that the bad weather would last all the night, somebody whistled in the yard, and the house-dog ran to the door wagging his tail. 'It is François!' exclaimed the young woman starting up and rushing to meet her husband.

"The others did not move. The widow Pinatel, casting a glance at the place her daughter-in-law had just left, muttered, 'I only hope she has kept the soup warm.'

"A moment afterwards the Abbat came in, and throwing his stick and heavy woollen cloak into a corner, said in a cheery manner, 'Good evening to you all. M. le Curé, how do you do?—and you, mother, is all right with you?' 'Well, I suppose one must always say yes to that,' she answered; 'and you, son, how do you feel yourself?' 'Why, not amiss as times go,' he cried, and then, patting his stomach, added with a loud laugh, 'but I daresay better soon.' 'You have had no supper?'

asked his mother; 'then come and sit down here.' She made room for him by her side at the table, and turning to his wife, said, 'Come, daughter-in-law, get your husband's supper.' The young woman did as she was bid, and fetched a large loaf of brown bread, and a basinful of soup with vegetables. Unfortunately, the soup was cold, which made the Abbat cross and the widow angry. 'My gracious!' she exclaimed, 'what have you been about? It really is enough to make one laugh to see a person of your age who cannot learn to keep a pot boiling on the fire. It is lucky that everybody is not so helpless as you,' she added, glancing approvingly at her favorite daughter-in-law. 'When my eldest son comes home, he always finds his wife hard at work, and something hot and snug by the fire for his supper. If you want to be a good housewife you had better learn a lesson from your sister-in-law.'

'As long as François does not complain, you have no business to find fault with me,' she answered in an arrogant tone. I hastened to say that it was my fault if the Abbat's supper was cold; that I had meddled with the saucepan. 'François will excuse it,' I added; 'I shall not be so stupid another time.' 'There is nothing to be angry about,' he said to the two women; 'the soup is very well as it is. So all is for the best; let us hear no more about it. Do you know that the fair turned out a poor concern after all? There were neither buyer or sellers, and not a creature with so much as a piece of five francs in his pocket. And then the weather turned cold yesterday. Snow fell on the Luberon, and I had to come back through roads where a dog would not like to travel. I was ankle deep in mud all the time, and my feet are like icicles.' 'Make haste then and put some hot ashes in your shoes,' the widow Pinatel cried; 'there is nothing like it to prevent a chill.'

'Here, wife,' the Abbat said, taking off his thick hob-nailed shoes, the leather of which was covered with a thick coating of frozen mud; 'take my shoes and manage it for me.' She scraped off the mud without saying a word, put in each shoe a shovelful of ashes, and brought them back to her husband.

'Seeing her so humbled and so cruelly punished for her fault, I could not but hope that she would have recourse to those religious consolations which alone could support and strengthen her amidst the many trials which must necessarily await her, and I went away praying and trusting that her soul would turn to God, and seek peace in His love and service.'

CHAPTER X.

THE FARM AND THE FAIR.

'ON the Sunday which followed my visit to the Pinatels, François' wife did not make her appearance at church, nor did she go to her duties at Christmas. The Pinatels were certainly by no means fervent Christians, but still the family were tolerably regular in their attendance at church. I asked the widow why her daughter-in-law did not come with her, and what she was doing at home. 'Nothing, as usual,' the woman answered. 'There she sits at the corner of the chimney, with her arms crossed and her feet in the ashes. If her petticoats happened to catch fire, I don't believe, heaven forgive me, that she would stretch out her hand to put it out.'

'I was in the habit of visiting the different families in my parish once or twice a month, according to what I supposed to be their need of spiritual advice or consolation, and only under exceptional circumstances broke through this rule. A fortnight therefore elapsed before I went again to the Pinatels. This time I found the young woman alone. She was sitting in the sun near the door of the house, her peasant's hat overshadowing her eyes, so that she only saw me when I was within a few steps of her. She seemed disagreeably surprised, and starting up suddenly, said in Provencal, 'There is nobody at home. They have all been out in the fields since morning.' I answered in French, 'I am not in your way, I

will sit down and rest a little while.' She had probably fancied that I knew nothing of her former position, for she blushed and seemed surprised that I did not speak to her in the dialect of the country, as I did to the other members of the family. But she soon recovered her self-possession, and with the air and manner she would have had in her mother's drawing-room, she said, 'Will you do me the honor to walk into the house?' I thanked her, but declined; and we remained seated on the bench outside.

'The weather happened to be wonderfully mild for the time of year. The birds hopped joyously amongst the bushes, and the little snowdrops were beginning to peep out in the sheltered spots under the hedges. 'What a beautiful day it is!' I said to the pale, stern young creature by my side. 'I always think this bright sunshine is like a look of love—the love of a merciful God—on the works of His hand. The most deeply afflicted soul ought to be cheered by those benignant rays, which seem to give new life to all creation. We feel that God is our Father, and that he watches over us.' She did not answer, but looked at me in that sneering, offensive way which persons who have no religion always put on with priests when they endeavor to suggest to them thoughts of faith, gratitude, and love of God. I had often met with this sort of contemptuous treatment at the hands of men imbued with the prejudices of philosophical intolerance, and I had sometimes been insulted by impious boasters who gloried in abusing the habit I wear, but the hostile, unfriendly manner of this young woman took me painfully by surprise. I went on to speak of the great consolations which the practice of Christian duties afford, but my words had an effect quite contrary to what I intended. They provoked an outburst I little expected, and which revealed opinions I could never have imagined to exist in a person of her age and sex. She began at once to argue, or rather to hold forth, explaining her views, and calling into question the teachings, not only of the Church, but of the Holy Scriptures. I was amazed at discovering in so young a woman such false and presumptuous ideas, such obstinacy in error, and a sort of impassioned scepticism. She had a mind at once arrogant and disputatious, which was easily worked up to excitement, and a heart which nothing seemed to soften and touch. There was not an atom in her of what the world calls tenderness and sensibility, but she possessed an impetuous imagination, full of false enthusiasm. As I sat listening to her, I could perfectly understand how her unbridled passions had misled her from one folly and one fault to another, into her present miserable position. I was young myself at that time, and had not yet learnt to fathom the fearful depths of the human conscience. I was so shocked at the state of that unhappy soul that I began silently to pray for her with all my heart, and to beseech our blessed Lord to dispel by a miracle of grace her miserable pride. Whilst I was thus pouring forth secret supplications to the divine mercy for her, the young woman, who fancied she had humbled and silenced me, said in a light tone, 'There is an end of the argument. Let us talk of something else.' I knew that I could give her some useful advice with regard to her position and the line of conduct she would do well to follow with regard to her husband's relations, but she did not let me finish what I had to say. 'I know very well what I have to expect,' she interrupted. 'These people detest me, and nothing will ever alter their feelings towards me: I must own, that if they hate me, I hate them just as much. We must, however, put up with one another on both sides till the widow Pinatel can pay her son the sum that is due to him from his father's inheritance. It is only thirty louis; but with that we shall be able to hire and stock a small farm, which we shall manage ourselves. My husband has been already looking out for something of the kind, and has heard of a place that would just suit us. It is property belonging to an *émigré*, so it will be long before the owner comes back. The worst of it is that we must wait till next Michaelmas, almost a whole year. But never mind; I must have patience.' This plan appeared to me very questionable, and I ventured to observe that it would be difficult to make it answer. 'You are not used to

work,' I said; 'and in spite of all your energy and good will, it will be hardly possible for you to accustom yourself to a life of so much labor and fatigue. Moreover, your husband will not be perhaps as much of a help to you as you fancy. He has never followed the plough or handled the spade like his brothers.' 'You may as well speak plainly,' she replied, very composedly. 'He is an idle fellow; and not only idle, but also addicted to drinking and gambling. I know his character very well. It was all his mother's fault. She has suffered him from his boyhood to haunt the fairs and markets, where he associates with horse-dealers and gipsies, and all sorts of vicious and profligate people. Ever since we have been married she tolerates, and even seems to approve of, his frequent absences from home. She even goes so far as to help him to find excuses for getting away from me. When we have a farm of our own he will not be able to wander about the country. I shall manage to keep him at home then. He will leave off loitering in the public-houses; he will lead a quiet, industrious life, the appointed lot of man on earth, and fulfil all the duties of a good citizen and the head of a family.'

"Christian charity compelled me to hold my tongue; but any one the least acquainted with François Pinatel must have been aware that he would never be able to earn his livelihood by agricultural labor, and that he was only capable of exertion when he had occasion to display his extraordinary strength. He had none of the qualities requisite for a farmer—patience, perseverance, shrewdness, circumspection, activity, and, above all, strict economy. He was a thick-skulled, good-hearted, merry wight, easily led astray, and subject to sudden outbursts of passion. In spite of all his defects, he had always been his mother's favorite child, and she perfectly knew his character. With great prudence she had taken care not to make over to him his share of the paternal inheritance; but, on the other hand, when this her prodigal son came home, his piece of bread and basin of soup were always forthcoming.

"It would have been vain to try and explain to the young wife the sort of tutelage her husband required, and which she would never herself be able to exercise. I therefore only begged her not to undertake anything without her mother-in-law's advice, and withdrew with the sad consciousness that I had not succeeded either in enlightening her as to the perils of her immortal soul, or even as to the questions relating to her temporal interests.

"A few days afterwards I left St. C——, Monseigneur d'Aix having appointed me to other functions. My flock thus passed under the spiritual care of another curé. The most disastrous days of the revolution were then at hand; the Church was threatened with an impending schism, and the priests who refused to adhere to the civil constitution of the clergy with persecution. During several months I went from place to place in the diocese, enlightening the undecided, and strengthening the courage of the weak. Towards the end of my circuit I came to S——, a small town about five miles from St. C——. It was then about the beginning of October, and nearly a year since I had left my parish. I arrived on the eve of the fair, which is one of the principal ones in that part of the country, and the occasion of a great concourse of people. It is a market as well as a fair, and on the last three days a festival. Opportunities of temptation and ruin are never wanting at gatherings like these. Gambling goes on at a frightful rate, high stakes are played for, and important affairs transacted. The kind of people who live by cheating their neighbors flock there in numbers.

"The next morning as I was coming out of the vicarage where I lodged, I met the Abbat. He was dressed in a new suit of clothes, and was going towards the site of the fair, with a bustling consequential air and manner. I went up to him to inquire after his relations. He answered, 'They were all well when I came away. My mother is just the same as ever; straight as an arrow, and as active as a girl of fifteen. My wife also is pretty well, though she looks thinish.' 'Are you here alone?' I asked. 'My eldest brother was coming with me, but he could not manage to get away,' he replied. 'You

must know, M. le Curé, that my hands are pretty full of business just now. I have taken a farm of three hundred perches of land in one lot. It is no small affair, I can tell you, to cultivate such a property as that. I have already engaged a man to drive the oxen, a shepherd and a ploughman; and now I am going to buy a pair of oxen, a horse, and a hundred of sheep. And then we must have corn to last us till the next harvest.' 'All that will cost you a good round sum,' I said. He tapped his leathern belt, making the money within it jingle, and, lowering his voice, said, 'I have seven hundred francs here, which my mother brought me in her apron just as I was coming away.' Thereupon we parted, and went our different ways. About an hour after, as I was crossing the market-place, I saw him going into a sort of *café* where well-to-do farmers, rich horse-dealers, and most of those who come to the fair, with well-filled purses, were wont to congregate. I knew that gambling went on there, and that the stakes were very high; but it never entered my mind that François Pinatel would adventure himself in such society, or be tempted to play at *vendôme*, a ruinous game of hazard. He was in the habit of keeping with the younger men, and I thought as soon as he had transacted his business he would be sure to go and wrestle with them or shoot at the target.

"In the afternoon I went into the olive groves to say my Office, and it was late before I returned from my walk. As I was coming back into the town I met the Abbat without his hat, which in the case of a peasant is a sign of the greatest agitation of mind. He was walking to and fro, heedless of the passengers, whom he elbowed without mercy. As soon as I appeared, he rushed up to me and said, 'M. le Curé, can you lend me a piece of six francs?' 'I have only one of these francs,' I replied. 'It is very much at your service; but in the first place you must tell me what has happened;' and taking him by the arm I forcibly drew him away from the crowd to a quiet spot where nobody could overhear us. He uttered himself to me like a child, and would not answer at first any of the questions I put to him; but suddenly rousing himself, he told me with a volley of oaths, intermingled with bursts of grief, that he had lost at play every penny he possessed. It was not the time for reproaches, or for trying to move him to repentance; all I could do was to try and soften his despair. But he had one of those excitable, unreasoning natures which must give full vent to their violence before it can subside. He kept repeating over and over again, 'My mother! O, what will my mother say? I had rather die than go home. I am not afraid of death. It is so easy to throw one's self into a well.' I shuddered at the thought that if left to himself he might commit such a crime and that neither the sense of God's justice nor the fear of eternal punishment would be sufficient to restrain him from self-destruction. In the midst of his bursts of passion he had moments of weakness, when he would sit down, and hiding his face in his hands, moan and weep like a woman. I took advantage of one of those intervals to say to him in an authoritative manner, 'Now, my dear Pinatel, there is only one thing to do. You must go back at once to St. C——, and, relying on your mother's kindness, own to her what has happened.' 'No, no,' he exclaimed; 'I tell you I never will show my face at home. I will go away, and nobody shall ever hear of me again.' 'Get up,' I said; 'get up at once and come. I shall go with you.' By degrees his resuals became less positive, and at last he yielded and we started.

"I tried as we went along to make him feel how wanting he had hitherto been in his duties to God and to his family, and spoke of the way in which he might in future make amends for his faults. He listened with deference to my observations, but I cannot say that I had the consolation of hearing at that time from his lips one word of real repentance. He soon calmed down, however, and his natural recklessness and levity got in some measure the better of his grief. Before we were half way to St. C——, he had recovered sufficient composure to enable him to give a detailed account of the misfortune that had befallen him. 'I will tell you the real truth,' he said with a sigh. 'I wanted to buy a gold chain for my wife. That was

the cause of it all. A gold chain costs, you see, about six y francs. When my eldest brother married he gave his wife a chain. I was vexed that I had not been able to make the same present to my wife. The fact is, that my mother would not listen to reason about it; not that she is partial to my elder brother—God forbid that I should say such an untruth—but she takes things into her head, you see. And three women in a house are just like three nuts in a bag. Now my sister-in-law is jealous of my wife because they call her in the village the fair peasant; and on the other hand, my wife is vexed because my brother's wife shows off her gold chain on Sundays, as if on purpose to taunt her with it.' 'I do not think your wife can care for that sort of thing,' I said, in hopes of cutting short what threatened to prove a long digression. 'O, but I can tell you she does,' he replied and went on: 'Well, to come back to what I was saying I wanted to buy a gold chain, and I had only just money enough to pay for the stock and a few sacks of corn. It suddenly came into my head to try my luck at *vendôme*. I went into the *café* with a piece of six francs in my hand, but quite resolved not to risk a penny more. It was Nicholas Fidelier that held the stakes. He had a heap of gold louis in front of him. I threw in my six francs, and unfortunately won; upon which I instantly staked three louis, and lost them. This made a hole in the price of the pair of oxen. I risked three more louis, and lost again. The blood began to rush to my head. I said to myself that the next time luck was certain to turn, and I staked and lost six louis more. The whole price of the pair of oxen was gone. I threw down a louis on the board to try once again. The banker's card was drawn, and that I won. Somebody behind me said that now I should be sure to win, because the banker had crossed his little finger with his thumb, which is a certain sign of bad luck. This put me into spirits, and I played on without reckoning, and lost again. Seventeen louis went in that way. I could still have bought the sheep and a little corn, but I had engaged the man to take care of the oxen, and the ploughman, and so that would not do. I played on, and lost everything up to my last piece of twelve sous—up to my last farthing; and then, as ill-luck would have it, I borrowed from Jean Paul, a neighbor of ours, four pieces of six francs, which I now owe him. You were quite right not to let me have your piece of three francs. It would have gone the way of the others. I might have known this morning that some misfortune would befall me, for as I was going out of the house I met a black dog running after a hen.'

"I exclaimed against this gross superstition, and tried to make him feel ashamed of it. But he would not give in about it, and added, 'It was just the same two years ago, when I went to Malpeire for the first time. I should have done well then to turn back again. Only think: just as I was setting out, I saw a crow flying lower than the top of our hen-coop. If my dear mother had known it, she would never have let me leave home that day. It is not that I repent of my marriage; but you see, M. le Curé—I speak to you as a friend, and I don't mind saying it to you—the peasant who marries a lady brings into his house the seven capital sins in person.' 'How can you say anything so shocking?' I said indignantly. 'Well, if not the whole seven, four or five of them at least,' he subjoined. 'Hold your tongue, unhappy man,' I said. 'It is shameful of you to talk in this manner, after misleading that young girl into marrying you.' 'I did not mislead her a bit,' he replied. 'As sure as that I must die one day, I never made up to her. The first time that I went to Malpeire for the St. Lazarus, about two years ago, she was present at the games. After the wrestling-match was over there was a ball, and I was her partner. It was no doubt a great honor, but I declare I should have liked better to have been with my friends, who had agreed to sup together on a rabbit-pie. She spoke to me in a pretty smiling sort of a way, and, as in duty bound, I answered in the best way I could. Before we parted she said some civil things. I did not at all expect. I stayed at Malpeire because she asked me, and she used to give me *rendezvous*, harmless ones, in all conscience. She stood up there on the terrace of the castle,

and I down there under a tree at the entrance of the village. We looked at each other, and spoke by signs. Sometimes I went under her window, and she threw down bits of ribbon. You see it was all nothing but folly and nonsense, and it never entered my head that the end would be a marriage in the church. But that was what she wanted, that headstrong girl, and she contrived to have her way about it. Well, well, perhaps her father and mother will think better of it, and may forgive her one of these days.'

CHAPTER XL

THE NIGHT AFTER THE FAIR.

"When we came near St. O——, and in sight of the house, the Abbat began to tremble, and to regret that he had come. 'I cannot go in,' he exclaimed 'I shall never have courage to go up to my mother and tell her what I have done—I had rather die.' 'Well, I will go in first,' I said, 'and break to your mother this sad news.' 'O, yes, M. le Curé,' he cried, greatly relieved, 'you will tell it to her before everybody. You see, I am only afraid of the first moment; as soon as they all know of it, I shall come in. Beg my mother to forgive me; tell her she must. 'And your wife—your unhappy wife?' I said reproachfully. 'O, as to her,' he answered, 'I am not afraid; she will forgive me fast enough.'

"We went up to the door. The Abbat stayed outside. I charged him not to go away, and went in myself. All the family were seated round the table at supper. I suppose my countenance betrayed uneasiness, for as soon as the widow Pinatel saw me she exclaimed, 'O my good Lord! Has some misfortune happened. What are you come to tell me, M. le Curé?' I entreated her to be calm, and to make up her mind to submit to the will of God, for that I had indeed a painful bit of news to give her. 'It must be about François,' she cried, beginning to tremble; 'all the others are here. My boy, my poor boy! What has happened to him?' The Abbat's wife came up to me, looking pale and anxious, but she did not say anything. 'What has happened to my son?' the widow exclaimed in a voice of despair. 'You will see him in a moment,' I answered; 'he is alive and well, but something very sad has happened to him.' I then gave a brief account of what had occurred. I added that François was deeply penitent, and that it was grief and shame that prevented him from coming in. She listened to me in silence, and then, raising her eyes to heaven, murmured: 'God be praised; I thought a worse misfortune had befallen us. I was afraid my poor boy was dead. Let him come in, M. le Curé; I won't reproach him. It was his own money, and it is very sad that he should have made such bad use of it, but nobody has any right to quarrel with him about it.' The Abbat had crept into the room, and when he heard what his mother said, he came in and threw his arms about her neck in a transport of gratitude. 'Don't be afraid, my poor boy,' she cried, with a somewhat ostentatious display of maternal affection and generosity; 'there will always be bread enough for you in your mother's house.' His brothers shook hands with the Abbat, and made room for him at the table, but his wife remained aloof and did not utter a word. She was sitting in a corner of the room, with her hands on her knees and her head hanging down. He went up to her and spoke in a whisper, as if trying to appease her, but she listened in a gloomy silence, without raising her head or making any answer. He renewed his entreaties, and tried gently to make her turn her face towards him. Then her fury broke out. 'Leave me alone!' she exclaimed in a loud voice, and standing up with a look of terrible anger. 'You are a wretch, unworthy of my notice. Do you suppose I am going to share the bread which, as a beggar, you will receive from your family? No. As you have not chosen to go out of this house with me, I shall go away alone, and leave you on the dunghill where you were born, mean vagabond that you are.' The Abbat turned pale with rage, and raised his hand; she drew back with a cry.

Everybody rose and rushed towards them. The widow Pinatel seized her son by the arm and held him back. I went up to the young woman, who was standing upright against the wall, looking straight before her with a fixed gaze. One of her cheeks was of a deadly white, the other crimson. 'He has struck me,' she said, with a fearful expression of countenance; and then, without listening to me, without saying a word or looking at any one, she walked out of the room, and we heard her going up stairs and uttering terrible curses.

"'Hold your tongue,' cried the Abbat, 'or else I—' 'Leave her alone,' cried the widow, compelling him to sit down; 'do not put yourself in the wrong. She began by insulting you, and you punished her. Now you must make friends and try and live peaceably together.' 'Well, we shall see about that,' he muttered; 'but do you know, that if you, my own mother, had said such things to me, I really think I should have flown at you.'

"It was getting late, and I had to go back to S———that same evening. The eldest Pinatel offered to accompany me, as he had business to transact the following day at the fair. Just as we were starting, the widow seemed to have a presentiment. She turned to the Abbat, and said, in an anxious manner, 'You ought to go and sleep at S———. Your wife is very angry, and if you speak to her to-night, something worse may happen than what took place just now.' 'Do you think that I am afraid of her?' he answered, half affronted. 'I'll tell you what, mother, she sha'n't insult me another time as she did just now.'

"We went our way. The weather was fine, the full moon shining on our road. Before losing sight of the house I turned my eyes once more towards it; and uttered an earnest prayer for the proud and rebellious soul I had left behind me. Alas, I ought to have been pleading for another soul then about to appear before the judgment-seat of God."

The Abbé Lambert sighed deeply, and again seemed reluctant to proceed with his narrative, but M. de Champaubert, in an agitated voice, implored him to finish it. Upon which, after what appeared a painful effort, he went on.

"Well," he said, "this was what happened. On the following day, as I was going to church, I saw some one on the high-road in the direction of St. O——, walking very fast, and coming my way. This man, as he passed me, called out, 'The fair peasant has killed her husband; I am going to Aix for the police.'"

"Well, she was certainly a very wicked woman," my uncle ejaculated.

"I at once determined," the Abbé said, "instead of going on to the church, to hasten to St. O——. Before I arrived there I met another man, who confirmed the terrible account I had heard from the first messenger. 'It is the fair peasant who had committed the crime,' he said, 'there is not the least doubt about it. Last evening she quarrelled with her husband. They went to bed, however, as usual, and nothing was heard in the night. But in the morning, the wife of the eldest son, who got up at daybreak to bake, as she passed their room felt her foot slipping in something, which turned out to be blood, which she then perceived to be oozing out from under the door. She screamed for help, and the two young Pinatels, who were just going off to the vineyard, heard her. They ran up stairs, and found their brother lying murdered in his bed. It would seem as if she had stabbed him in his first sleep, for he had evidently not moved. Just now, when I came away, he was still alive, but was expected every minute to breathe his last.' 'And that woman?' I asked, with a shudder. 'They don't know where she is,' he answered, 'but they are gone in search of her. She must have escaped across the fields, for the door of the house was found open. But it is impossible she can escape; the whole village is after her, bent on avenging the Abbat.' I hurried on, begging God with all my heart to give me time to prepare that unhappy man to appear before Him. As I approached the house I heard cries and sobs, which made me afraid all was over. The room down-stairs was full of people, for the Pinatels held a

certain position in the village. I was told that the Abbat was still alive, but not conscious. I made my way up the sort of ladder which served as stairs, and into a dimly lighted room, where all the family were gathered round the Abbat, who was lying in the position of a man asleep. A white sheet covered the bed, and only his face was to be seen resting against the pillow. His mother was bending over him with inexpressible grief, and kept now and again speaking to him, as if she hoped he could hear her. When I came in she exclaimed 'Yesterday you brought him back full of life and health, and now he is about to die! That she-wolf murdered him in his sleep like a poor helpless lamb.'

"I must try to help him," I said, and with a strong feeling of faith in my heart I knelt down on the opposite side of the bed. I fancied the Abbat moved, then, and opened his eyes. The doctor arrived at that moment. He raised the sheet, and after having ascertained that the pulse was still beating, he leaned over the dying man to listen to his almost imperceptible breathing. Then he came round to my side of the bed, and looking at me shook his head. 'Is there no hope?' I asked in a low voice. 'Not the slightest,' he answered. 'The poor fellow has only a few minutes to live. It would have been over long ago but for the extraordinary strength of his constitution. Life does not easily withdraw from that young and vigorous frame.'

"I went close to the Abbat and felt for his hand. 'My son, my dear son,' I said to him, 'if you wish God to forgive you raise up your heart to Him now. Pray with me; pray for your wife and forgive her; you have only a moment more to live, but that moment may purchase the pardon of all your sins. Do you hear me, my dear son? Are you sorry for all your sins, and do you forgive your wife in the hope that God will forgive you?'

"He made an effort to speak, but failed. I had, however, the unspeakable consolation of feeling his hand feebly grasping mine in token of assent, upon which I gave him absolution. He turned his languid eyes towards me, and then towards his mother. A few moments after, François Pinatel gave up his penitent and ransomed soul into the hands of his Maker."

CHAPTER XII.

WHAT BECAME OF THE PICTURE.

"When I returned to S——, I heard that the wretched criminal had been arrested and put into prison at Aix. It was not possible for me to visit her here, for at that time none but the priests who had taken the oath could enter the State prisons. The only thing I could do was to write her a letter, in which I said everything which Christian charity could say to save her from despair. I had the satisfaction of ascertaining that my letter had reached her.

"In times of popular commotion and political disturbances the law deals silently, as it were, with great criminals, and on that account the unhappy woman escaped a horrid celebrity. After lingering in prison for about a year, she appeared before the tribunals which had been substituted for the old parliamentary courts, and was tried and condemned according to the newly enacted laws. She was sentenced to be branded by the executioner, and to imprisonment for life. I was not in France at that moment, the violence of the persecution had compelled me to take refuge in the States of the Church, and by the time I heard of her sentence she had already undergone a part of it. When I returned from exile, the whole affair was nearly forgotten. I only learned that the fair peasant, as she was still called, was in the penitentiary of Embrun, and that the widow Pinatel had died of grief, as it was supposed, because the judges had not sentenced her daughter-in-law to death."

"And since then you have heard nothing of that unhappy woman?" exclaimed M. de Champaubert.

The Abbé Lambert hesitated a little, as if he felt some scruple about giving a direct answer to that question. At last

he said, "I subsequently learnt that by her sincere penitence and exemplary conduct she had earned her pardon and come out of prison. Her situation then was very sad. She had nothing to look to but destitution and universal reprobation. Somebody, however, who knew by what a deep and sincere repentance she had atoned for her crime, helped her to conceal her name and obtain the means of earning an humble livelihood."

"M. le Curé," said M. de Champaubert, in an agitated manner, "I entreat you to make further inquiries about her, and let me know the result. It is my anxious desire to secure her sufficient means to live upon, so that she may end her days in quiet."

The Abbé Lambert bowed low, and said, "I will try, M. le Marquis."

Dom Gêrusac looked at the picture, and said, "How extraordinary it is that I should have had so long under my eyes, without the least idea of it, the heroine of such a dreadful story. My dear Abbé, you ought to have told me of it."

The Abbé Lambert looked puzzled.

"That is Mlle. de Malpeire's picture," I said; "did you not recognize it, M. l'Abbé?"

He shook his head, and answered sadly, "No, indeed I did not. Even when I first saw her she had not that blooming, smiling face; she was not like that picture."

A long silence ensued; the candles were nearly burnt out, but a fresh supply of fagots threw out a blaze which lighted up the room. It had left off raining, but the wind still whistled amongst the trees and shook the outer blinds. When the clock struck twelve, M. de Champaubert got up and wished us good-night. He was to set out early the following morning, and it was settled that we should walk with him as far as the high-road. Before leaving the room, he went up to the Abbé Lambert, shook him by the hand, and emptying his purse on the corner of the chimney, he said in a low voice, "This is for your people, M. le Curé; I intend every year to renew the same offering."

I did not close my eyes for some hours that night, and I do not think M. de Champaubert slept at all. Long after midnight I heard him pacing up and down his room. We were both thinking of that beautiful but guilty woman who had been his first love, and whose portrait had bewitched me thirty-five years afterwards. I could not divest myself even then of a strange interest about her. My mind kept dwelling on her tragical fate. I shuddered at her crime, but thought, nevertheless, that the Abbé had deserved a thousand deaths for having dared to strike Mlle. de Malpeire. I ascribed the terrible vengeance she had taken to the proud spirit of her ancestral race, which could not leave an insult unrevenged. The thought of her low-born spouse excited in me both jealousy and anger. In spite of this miserable end, I thought he had been only too happy to be her husband, and envied his destiny. I spent the night in a feverish, restless state. The same image kept passing and repassing before my eyes, whether I opened or closed them, sometimes smiling, sometimes looking sternful and mournful. I was fast asleep, however, when Dom Gêrusac called me the next morning. M. de Champaubert was soon ready, and we started. The mild rays of an autumn sun were gilding the valley; no early frosts had yet blighted the fresh green of the foliage. The cheery robin-redbreast was chirping in the hawthorn bushes, and beautiful butterflies hovered over the rosemary bushes. But above the level where the soft breezes of the south were blowing from the coasts of the Mediterranean, rose the crests of the mountains, already covered with their snowy mantles.

Before we reached the high-road, M. de Champaubert turned round and gave a last look at the surrounding landscape. He gazed on the two lofty peaks separated by a deep chasm which crowned the southern side of the nearest mountain, and murmured with a deep sigh, "There is the Pass of Malpeire." A few minutes afterwards we arrived at the spot where his carriages were waiting. He shook hands with me in a very cordial manner, and then turning to my uncle, said with much

feeling, "Now that we have met again, my dear old friend, I find it hard to part with you."

"And yet we have had a melancholy time of it," murmured my poor dear uncle, "and all along of that horrid portrait."

The two friends embraced. The Marquis sprang into his carriage, and stretching his head out of the window made us a last sign of farewell. We soon lost sight of the carriage in the midst of a cloud of dust, but stood a while on the roadside watching the white speck vanishing in the distance.

The first thing Dom Gêrusac did when he came home was to send for Babelou, and to desire her to carry up to the lumber-room the object of my romantic worship. When she had left the room with it, he turned to me and said: "The sight of that dreadful woman would have disturbed my digestion; I should always have been thinking at dinner of her horrid adventures. And, after all, that portrait is a wretched daub. I am sorry to say so, for Champaubert's sake, but really the arm is quite out of proportion, and the little finger of the right hand very badly drawn. In short, it is a wretched performance, and I was very foolish ever to hang it up over my chimneypiece."

I did not remonstrate against this verdict, nor would I ask my uncle to make me a present of the picture he held so cheap, and which I so highly prized. I should have been afraid of exposing myself if I had ventured to express a wish to possess it, but I resolved to steal the despised treasure, and to carry it off with me. There was no time to lose, for my holidays were almost over. I was to go back to college the next day but one. I did not apprehend any great difficulty in the matter. I had only to make my way into the lumber-room, which was in a corner of the attic, to bring away the picture, and to intrust it to some boy, who, for an adequate consideration, would undertake to carry it to the place where I always met the diligence.

Before going in search of the accomplice, without whom I could not carry out my scheme, I insidiously questioned Babelou. "How did you manage, my dear," I said, "to get that heavy picture up-stairs? It must have been difficult to find room for it in the attic?"

"O, I just poked it behind the door," she answered; "I had something better to do, I promise you, than to hunt out a place for it amidst all the old rubbish up stairs."

"Does my uncle keep his odds and ends under lock and key?" I asked, trying to put on an appearance of indifference.

"He thinks he does," she replied with a shrug; "but as we are always going in and out for one thing or another, the key generally remains hanging by the side door."

I went away satisfied with this information, and spent almost all the day wandering about my gun in my hand, by way of shooting, but really to try and find in the neighborhood a youth capable of executing my orders. At last I met a young scamp who, for a five franc piece I gave him, engaged to do my bidding and hold his tongue. I desired him to come that evening, and station himself at the bottom of the alley between eleven and twelve o'clock at night. He was to bring with him two wicker trussels between which I intended the lovely picture to travel. I fully meant always to keep it with me. When all this was arranged, I came in and prepared to perform my part in the plot.

It was getting late. The light was waning, and a melancholy silence reigned in the house. There was nobody in the drawing-room, only the dogs sleeping in the arm-chairs. I thought my uncle was in the library, hard at work over his books, and Babelou in the kitchen. The moment seemed particularly favorable. I went up-stairs with flushed cheeks and a beating heart, like a man engaged in a desperate adventure. The lumber-room was, as I said before, on the third story. Just as I arrived at the top of the stairs I met Dom Gêrusac, with his reading-lamp in his hand, and his spectacles pushed back on his forehead. He looked quite grieved and dismayed.

"Poor Marian," he said, "is as ill as possible; the Abbé Lambert has just given her the last Sacraments. She may die at any moment."

"My heart sank within me, more, I am ashamed to say, at

the failure of my own plans than at the news about Marian. Her room was next to the one where the picture was, and the present state of things made it impossible to remove it without attracting notice from those who were assembled round her bed. My uncle, who was truly grieved about his old servant, took my arm to go down-stairs. We found Babelou crying in the entrance-hall.

"Poor Marian," she said, wiping her eyes with her apron, "was very ill yesterday, but she would rather have died in the kitchen than go to bed before the dinner was cooked. And yet she knew very well she was dangerously ill. Whilst I was waiting at table, she told Gothou to send immediately for the Curé. It was for her that he came last night in all that pouring rain. To cheer her up this morning, I showed her the two good pieces which M. le Marquis had left for us. She then said she felt much better, but it did not last long, and now she is dying!"

We went into the drawing-room, and half an hour afterwards the Abbé Lambert came in and told us all was over. Marian's all but sudden death was one of those events which throw a bachelor's household into confusion. My poor uncle was quite distressed, and kept repeating, "She was a very faithful creature. During the twelve years she lived with me I never had occasion to find the slightest fault with her. It will be no easy matter to replace so good a servant."

I was occupied meanwhile in considering whether it would be possible to carry off Mlle. de Malpeire before next morning. Suddenly my uncle said, "I wonder who are the heirs of that poor woman? A year's wages were owing to her, and she had put by a little money, I think. If she has any relatives it must go to them. I must make inquiries."

The Abbé shook his head; he was writing a memorandum for the Registrar. When he had finished it he handed over the paper to my uncle. I saw Dom Gêrusac start, and throw up his hands and eyes with a gesture of profound astonishment. Almost unconsciously I approached, and looking over his shoulder, glanced at the paper and read: "To-day, October 12, 18—, died at Pierre de Corbie, Madeleine Marie de Malpeire, widow of François Pinatel."

"Marian—Marian was Mlle. de Melpaire!" I almost shrieked out the words. The Abbé Lambert and my uncle were both leaning against the table with their hands clasped together; I think they were praying. Babelou was sobbing bitterly.

I went out and sat down at the corner of the chimney with my head resting on my hands. I did not move or speak the whole evening, and about twelve o'clock went to my room. Soon afterwards I heard some one under my windows, calling to me in a suppressed voice. It was my accomplice, who tired of waiting for me in the alley, was come to remind me of my appointment.

"I say, Monsieur Frederick," he said, standing on tip-toe, "I am come to fetch the picture. Could you not hand it down to me through the window?"

"I have not got it, and I don't want it," I angrily cried, "go along with you."

Fifteen years afterwards, after the death of Dom Gêrusac, who made me his executor and residuary legatee, I found Mlle. de Melpaire in the same place where Babelou had put her. The mice had done some mischief to the painting, and the little finger which my uncle had found so much fault with had disappeared. I had it cleaned and repaired, and it now figures in a very respectable manner in my portrait gallery.

Captain Ricard.

I.

IN the very interesting "Souvenirs of an Army Chaplain," published in 1852, by a priest, who under his cassock bore the noble heart of a soldier, the Abbé Sève has written some remarkable papers. His mind inspired by holy and bold convictions, has furnished him on this subject with eloquent pages, which have enabled us to give an account of the fact that forms the subject of this story. It is well known that in 1830, three thousand officers, true to the cause they had sworn to uphold, broke their sword, and mourning in silence the fall of an illustrious monarchy, threw themselves into exile. Among these brave men was Frédéric Ricard. His heart free, and his purse light, but satisfied with having done his duty, he took the road to Vigan. Before seeking in a strange land for some provision against the future, he was desirous of seeing once more his native country.

Our hero was of middling stature, but well made; his broad shoulders indicated strength, and the deep lines in his bold forehead revealed a mind far above the common. Of an impetuous character, but still, when necessity required, sufficient master of himself to control those warm passions inherent in the inhabitants of the south, Captain Ricard had the instinct of appreciating just and holy things; he was as strong as a lion, but gentle as a lamb. Surprised by the revolution of July, when at Provins, where his regiment was in garrison, he traversed a part of France, avoiding the high roads, so as not to hear or see anything that would recall the evil days of revolution. He was obliged, however, to pass through Avignon. This town, though protected by the good sense of the populace, was in a state of great ex-

citement. It was not without difficulty that Captain Ricard, making his way through the groups assembled before the gate of Loule, could reach the hotel Saint-Yves.

Seven or eight young men, whom the experienced eyes of the captain recognized as commercial travellers, were seated at a table covered with glasses and bottles of different colors. At the sight of the new comer, closely enveloped in his long blue riding coat, buttoned up to the neck, the jovial party exchanged looks with each other, as much as to say, there is an *ultra*. At this period *ultra* and *Jesuit* where the two great stalking horses used by the liberals to attack the clergy and those of the laity who did not know by heart the verses of Béranger and other worse than flippant productions of that day.

The captain placed himself at a vacant table, and called for a glass of absinthe, to prepare, according to custom, his digestive organs for dinner. "Absinthe!" said one of the clerks in a low tone. "A green liquor! we are not mistaken; he is a Carlist, who knows? an ex-minister disguised. Polignac perhaps? Suppose we arrest him?"

During this conversation, the captain, the object of these various suppositions, continued quietly sipping his draught. On their part, the bon-vivants concerted together to submit him to a system of ordeal, which they began, by singing in chorus a verse of a military ballad. At each couplet, the singers, looking askance at the captain, added these words, "Liberty for ever! Down with the Jesuits! down with the Carlists!" The captain was immovable. Encouraged by his silence, perhaps attributing his reserve to a feeling of fear, the travellers redoubled their audacity; their allusions became so pointed at last, that the captain resolved to put a stop to them. The wool of the lamb changed under

the insult to the lion's mane. Frederic Ricard, his countenance pale with anger, but calm and resolved as a man who knows his own strength and right, rose from the table and slowly approached the one who seemed to be the chief of the party.

"Monsieur," he said, laying his right hand on his shoulder, "I cannot suppose you have any intention of insulting me, for you are eight against one; I believe you to be good Frenchmen to do so cowardly a thing. Be that as it may, you will permit me to remark that gentlemen of good breeding ought to respect those whom chance unites under the same roof. Now, as your songs annoy me, and here, we are neither in the theatre, nor in the street, you will greatly oblige me by discontinuing them."

"Monsieur," answered the chief of the band sharply, in a shrill cracked voice, "we are extremely sorry to inform you it is not in our power to satisfy you on this point. It is true we are neither in the theatre, nor in the street; but we are in a public place, where each can do as he pleases. We shall continue to sing, and you can dance, if that is agreeable."

"That is quite right," replied Ricard; "then each for himself, and God for all," and returning to his seat, he finished his glass of absinthe, rang for the waiter, and ordered him to bring dinner. It was Friday, a day of abstinence.

"I am certain," said one of the young men, loud enough to be heard, "that this Jesuit in the blue coat is going to make a maigre dinner."

"That will be a droll thing to see," added his neighbor.

"We shall have a good laugh," said the chief; and giving a new signal he commenced a song from Béranger. Just then an organ began playing in the Square de Louie the overture of Gulistan. Ricard whispered to the waiter who brought his plate; "go and bring that organ boy in here; fetch him quickly. Here are five francs, which you can divide with him."

"I understand, Monsieur," said the boy, "he shall come directly."

"We shall have a good laugh," returned the facetious traveller, thinking of the maigre dinner he was about to ridicule.

At the same moment the organ boy, his face sparkling with joy, entered the hall, and turning the handle of his instrument, began playing the first notes of a chorus in *La Dame Blanche*.

"Will you please take yourself off as quickly as you can, Mr. Grinder!" cried the singers, thus interrupted in the best part of their song.

"Stop!" said the captain, in a voice accustomed to command, and then added: "Messieurs, I detest vocal music without accompaniment; at the same time I admire harmony. Let me have my organ, you can have your songs."

"But, Monsieur, we are not in the street."

"I am aware of that; but we are in a public place, where each can do as he pleases."

This reply was unanswerable; the noisy party had to suffer the consequences of the law they had themselves laid down. They began again, in a higher key, but the clamorous notes of the instrument playing the deep chorus of the *Marche des Tartares*, so overpowered and confounded the voices, that after a long discord the organ remained master of the field. Not satisfied with his first victory, the captain, turning towards the band, whose extinguished fire threatened to rekindle in an anti-religious refrain of Béranger's; "Messieurs," he asked, "do you like duets? You do not answer this,—this gives consent; so we will treat you with a piece which will set your hair on end." At these words, seeing in a corner of the room the box of the public crier, he fetched it, gave a signal to the organ player, and both of them executed, on the air of *La belle Arsène*, an infernal discord—a veritable charivari. In less than five minutes, Ricard had obtained such a victory as a generous adversary never abuses; he therefore dismissed the organ boy and his instrument.

The travellers, beaten on their own ground, waited for an opportunity of revenge. It presented itself at the moment

they feared it was escaping them; in fact, they had prepared their batteries against their adversary's scanty dinner; what was their surprise, then, when they saw the cover removed!

"Have we been deceived?" said they, looking quite mystified.

"We are *robbed*," said the chief of the party, seeing the captain vigorously attack a magnificent roast fowl.

"I would willingly give three francs ten sous," added one of his companions, whose red nose testified to his propensities; "I will give a hundred sous to the waiter; to see that fowl change into a carp."

Wounded to the quick by the hidden provocation which this speech implied, Ricard put back the juicy wing which perfumed his plate, and calling the boy, said, "Take away this fowl."

"Is it not roasted enough, sir?"

"Nothing could be better."

"Then why does monsieur refuse it?"

"Because it does not suit me to eat it."

The travellers, their eyes fixed on the two speakers, waited with anxiety the issue of the scene. The officer continued, "What day is it?"

"Friday, monsieur."

"Are you quite sure?"

"Perfectly sure."

"In that case, replace this fowl by a carp."

"Monsieur will then be served *en maigre*?"

"Yes, my friend."

"Good. Now we shall have our laugh," said the travellers, rubbing their hands.

As he desired, the officer was served entirely *en maigre*. The carp, as you may imagine, received, on its entry, the honors of an ovation. We will pass over the sarcasms and jokes with which the singers seasoned the captain's fare; he, calm and immovable as an old trooper, did not even let his fork tremble. It was delightful to witness him, opposing a dignified silence to foolish pleasantries, invented out of hatred to the clergy and religion; the more direct the insults, the less they seemed to affect him.

"Decidedly the holy man has made a vow of patience," said one.

"I think," said another, "that he carries a hair-shirt under his great coat."

"He gives himself the airs of a soldier, and yet has only served at Mass."

"Parbleu! I recognize him!" laughingly said another of the guests, who until this moment had kept a prudent silence; "he was at the side of M. Dupin at the procession of St. Acheul, and, like him, carried a holy taper."

"Gargon," said the captain, "bring me some coffee."

"Gargon," cried the one who was the leader of the party, "do not forget the little glass of holy water."

"Bravissimo! well hit!" shouted the insulters, enthusiastic at what they considered the finishing stroke.

The captain slowly took his cup of mocha, then, when he had drank the last drop of cognac that the boy gave him, he rose from the table as calm as if nothing had happened to disturb his equanimity.

"Now," said the chief of the party, "we have the second handle."

"Let us see who has the best," answered the officer, and measuring from head to foot the tall figure of his facetious adversary, he asked, "What is your name, monsieur?"

"Chameron, François-Joseph."

"Monsieur Joseph-François Chameron, of what country are you?"

"Of a country where the seed of the Jesuits has not taken root."

"In what religion have you been brought up?"

"In the Catholic religion. But you, monsieur, let me ask you in your turn, what are you called?"

"Frederic Ricard, at your service."

"What is your country?"

"A country where all convictions are respected when they are conscientious."

"Of what religion are you?"

"I am a Huguenot."

"Huguenot! Why, then, do you abstain on a Friday?"

"To give, in religious matters, lessons of tolerance to pretended patriots,—to give, on suitable occasions, lessons of politeness to impertinents. Monsieur Joseph-François Chameron, you are a worthless fellow."

"Monsieur!"

"Monsieur Joseph-François Chameron, and you, messieurs, who, for the past hour, have insulted a man who has done nothing to provoke you, you are a set of cowards!"

The young men, thunderstruck at this epithet, and the fierce looks of the officer, kept silence. The officer continued.

"Amongst you all, insulting bullies, there will not be found one whose heart is manly enough to offer me the reparation which is due to me."

"Enough, monsieur!" cried one of the insulters, unable to stand this taunt. "What are your arms?"

"Mine will be yours."

"Your hour?"

"That which is next to strike will be the best."

"Well, then, let us go!"

"I am at your service; but, before leaving, you have a small account to settle," said the captain, addressing him whose face was ornamented with the red nose.

"For what?"

"That which you owe this boy."

"François?"

"Who for a hundred sous favored your wishes in transforming to a carp the bird he had served me with."

"Ah! I had forgotten," said the traveller; and with ill-disguised vexation he gave a five-franc piece to François.

"Now let us depart," said the captain; and a few minutes after the two adversaries found themselves, sword in hand, in the aisle of La Bartolasse.

"Monsieur," said the officer, disarming the travelling clerk at the first pass, "I am not in the habit of fighting duels; but I like to show those who know not how to use a sword, that they will do well to learn how to hold their tongue. March off!"

II.

Five years had flown by since the incident I have just related, years full of events more or less strange, more or less dramatic. Frederic Ricard, the principal personage in this history, passed through them with the stoicism that characterizes a strong-hearted man. Leaving Du Vigan where he had gone immediately after the above occurrence to sell a small patrimony and realize a few livres, he determined to seek a fortune on some of the great roads which were open to his ambition. Once he thought of finding it in Portugal, under the banner of Don Miguel. Vain hope! The courage of heroism does not always suffice to fix the capricious goddess, not even on a field of battle. Grievously wounded at Santarem, by the side of the Marquis De Larochejacquelin, who himself received a mortal wound, he escaped as by a miracle. As soon as he was cured, he renounced the profession of arms, and returned to France to seek a new position. Then, one after the other, he became a lawyer without clients, a physician without patients; he tried every means, and succeeded in none; indeed he would have died of misery and hunger if one of his old comrades, a discharged officer like himself, now living on the products of his vineyards at Grenoble, had not offered him a place in his flourishing domain.

Strange inconsistency of earthly things! our brilliant cavalry officer, Frederic Ricard, has become a traveller in the sale of Bordeaux wines. He consoled himself with this metamorphosis in thinking, like a good royalist, that Bordeaux was the king of wines! Now, as he was active, zealous and intelligent, he rapidly rose in his new employment, and soon dis-

tinguished himself above his companions in all those qualities which are requisite to a good commercial traveller. The nature of his business often called him to that part of the country where the first scene of our story occurred, and he spent many weeks of every year at Avignon.

One day, when he was proceeding to this town, he met as a traveling companion in the Marseilles diligence a priest, whose pleasant countenance and interesting conversation attracted his notice. Ere the first stage they had formed an intimacy, which is not so soon made now, since horses have been obliged to give way to the power of steam. Locomotion has gained in rapidity what it has lost in agreeableness. Thus, we do not travel in these days; we are removed from one place to another; we can go quicker now from Lyons to Paris than we could formerly from Paris to St. Germain. Our two travellers were making their reflections on the subject of the railroads established at this time in the department of the Loire, when the diligence stopped before the gate of Loule—they had arrived at Avignon.

"At what hotel do you stop?" asked the ecclesiastic of the traveller.

"At the hotel Sain'-Yves."

"If you will allow me, I will join you at the same hotel."

"We can do still better; we can dine together."

"I was just going to propose so. At least, if," answered the traveller, with marked emphasis, "at least, if you have no repugnance to sit at table with a man who differs from you in religious belief. I am a Protestant."

"I am a Catholic priest, monsieur," replied the ecclesiastic, "that is to say, your brother, for all men, even those born in error, are the sons of the same God. By this title, I love and esteem you. I love you more, perhaps, since I see you living so far from the truth. We will dine together, monsieur; at least if you,"—and the priest hesitated a little in his turn,—"if you do not object to a Friday's abstinence."

"A *maigre* dinner has never frightened me," replied the Protestant; "and I have even made an excellent one at the hotel we are about to enter. It is many years ago now, but I will tell you the story, between the fruit and the cheese; perhaps it will please you, as much as your company in the diligence has me."

The priest answered these words with a smile, the singular expression of which escaped the notice of his companion.

As he promised, the traveller related the story of his encounter, with which the abbé seemed much interested.

"You conducted yourself nobly, monsieur," said the priest; "and you may be sure that the lesson you gave, though a Protestant, to a bad Catholic, will not have been lost. Be that as it may, the man you so wisely corrected ought to bless your name, for you might have ended his days with your sword. May the life you have preserved be nobly and usefully spent! Have you seen him since?"

"I have never met him again. I should like to see him, however, as we are now in a similar position in life; for I, like himself, traffic in wines."

"Then most certainly you will one day find him."

"To be frank with you, I should greatly like it."

"To offer him his revenge?"

"To offer him my hand."

"Well said, monsieur: you have a noble heart. You will see him one day, be assured; but, till that time arrives, you will always have a share of my prayers, that——" "That," interrupted the traveller, laughing, "that, as at this same table a fowl was transformed into a carp so a Huguenot may be changed into a Catholic. Is that what you would say, my dear Abbé? It will be more difficult, I forewarn you."

"Nothing is impossible with God," added the priest solemnly.

The two new friends separated, after exchanging cards, and promising to meet in Paris, where both were going; the priest to preach during Lent, the traveller to visit his customers.

One day, soon after arriving at Lyons, Frederic Ricard ascended the top of Notre-Dame-de-Fourvières, in order to ad-

view the magnificent panorama which lay stretched at the foot of the sacred hill. From this eminence could be seen the town of Lyons, with its beautiful quays, its old churches, its numberless bridges, its two rivers, and the vast square of Bellecour, ornamented with the equestrian statue of Louis XIV.; then the rich plain of Grenoble, sown with elegant villas, and divided by the high-road to Dauphine; in the distance the Alps, whose summits, covered with eternal snows, serve as a barometer to the inhabitants of the city.

When our ex-cavalry officer had sufficiently satisfied his curiosity, he mechanically entered the holy chapel. It was a day consecrated to the Holy Virgin, and there was a great crowd at the foot of the privileged altar, from whence the celestial Mother of the divine Redeemer watches incessantly over the children of her beloved city. The altar was decked with flowers; the image of the Immaculate Virgin, clothed in gold vestments, was illuminated by the light of a thousand tapers; and an old priest, whose forehead was encircled by a crown of silver hair, recounted from the pulpit the praises of Mary. At this name, Ricard felt his soul moved for the first time; for the first time, perhaps, he comprehended all there was of consolation and hope in the cultus of the Mother of God; and for the first time, he secretly dared, in the bottom of his heart, to establish a comparison between the two religions, which certainly was not in favor of his own. There was so much serenity shed on the calm foreheads of the worshippers of Mary! so much ineffable sweetness on their prayerful lips, that he could not prevent himself from pronouncing a name that his mother had never taught him—a name, sweeter than the sweetest honey. On the morrow Ricard again went to Notre-Dame-de-Fourvières, and like the day before experienced emotions of which he could not account; was it grace beginning to work in his soul? We know not; we only know that when he left Lyons, he several times put his head out of the diligence window, to see the little white steeple planted on the hill of Notre-Dame-de-Fourvières, like a light-house of mercy between earth and heaven.

III.

When he arrived in Paris, the ex-officer went to the priest of Saint-Roch, from whom he was to obtain the address of his travelling companion. It was given to him as had been promised. The good father was living at the Hotel du Bon Lafontaine, Rue de Grenelle Saint-Germain. Ricard took a hackney-coach, and ordered the coachman to drive thither. The ecclesiastic was just gone out. Ricard inquired when he would return. "Very late," he was informed, "for he was to preach at six o'clock." The captain looked at his watch; it was half-past five.

"Could you tell me where I can find him at this moment?"

"At the sacristy of Saint Sulpice, without doubt; but it will be difficult to see him before he has finished his sermon."

"How long does his discourse last?"

"That depends; an hour, perhaps—an hour and a half—two hours, even."

"Two hours! that is a long time," said Ricard. "Never mind, I will go to St. Sulpice, and wait for him."

The sacred orator had just mounted the pulpit. From the animation of his voice and actions, one might see he was completely engrossed with his subject. He had chosen for his text this proposition: "The divinity of the Catholic religion proved by its works."

Ricard leant against the angle of a pillar, and listened to a language hitherto unknown to him. After having graphically sketched the first ages of Christianity, so wonderfully established by twelve poor fishermen on the ruins of the old world, the orator spoke of the cross shining on the darkness of the middle ages, and shedding its glorious light over the new world. He passed in review the phalanx of doctors, philosophers and saints laboring with generous hands to develop the civilization hidden in the writings of barbarism, and to awaken man, stupefied by ignorance and slavery; then fol-

lowing from century to century those sublime benefactors of humanity, always unchangeable in their faith, persevering in their unity (that divine characteristic of Catholicism), he proved, in the second place, that the Catholic religion alone had been the initiator of all great ideas; that from her alone came the amelioration of humanity, and the merit of the numerous works set on foot for the benefit of the human race. Frederic Ricard, half hidden behind the pillar, listened to the preacher with the most lively attention. Reviewing, on his side, the dissensions of the numerous Protestant sects, worshipping in as many different forms, he comprehended that truth could only be one, invariable, immutable, as the God from whom it proceeds; and he saw that the Catholic religion alone possessed this character, which was therefore an irrefragable proof of the divinity of its origin. The orator finished his discourse by a short peroration, showing the necessity of following the Catholic faith, not only in order to attain the facilities of another world, but to enjoy in this that peace of soul which is the most certain indication of true happiness.

The preacher descended from the pulpit, and returned to the sacristy. Ricard followed, and embracing him, said, "Your voice has touched my soul, my dear Abbé."

The Abbé replied, "I shall thank God for it, if it has opened the way to that light which penetrates and converts."

"We shall see. Do you preach often?"

"Three times a week. Why do you ask?"

"To arrange that I may come and hear you each time."

In fact, our brave ex-officer did not miss one sermon of his new friend, whose enlightened and devoted zeal for the salvation of his brethren, changed the regard he had felt on their first meeting into the warmest affection. In fact, to be nearer him, Ricard had quitted the Rue Saint Honoré, and taken furnished apartments in the Faubourg Saint Germain. The worthy priest avoided all that could resemble a wish to convert; he wished to leave the result to time, and the more efficacious influence of divine grace. On his part, Ricard equally avoided speaking of the progress which grace was really effecting in his heart. The festival of Easter was approaching, and Ricard had not said a single word of the mental struggle he was undergoing. The Abbé began to fear that indifference was the cause of his unaccountably prolonged silence, when he one morning received the following letter:

"MY DEAR ABBÉ:

"During fifteen days, two irreconcilable adversaries have chosen my heart for their battle-field. They have struggled with a perseverance which has had in it something superhuman, but which has not yet ended in a decisive result. 'Truth is in Catholicism,' said one; 'be a Catholic.' 'To change one's religion,' replies the other, 'is to be a coward.' 'To persevere in an acknowledged error is folly,' said one. 'At all times apostasy has been considered a shameful and mean thing,' said the other. 'In all ages conversion has been acknowledged as praiseworthy in the eyes of faithful men, and meritorious in the eyes of God,' said one. 'All religions are good—why wish to change?' said the other. 'Enter the bosom of this Church, which offers all the chances of salvation, and as the sole depository of unity contests the truth with all others; be a Catholic,' said one. 'Remain a Protestant; for if you deny the faith of your fathers, what will your brothers and friends say?' replied the other. 'It is not to deny the faith of your fathers, but only to return to that of your grandfathers.' The unhappy one who is carried away by the torrent of error, acts justly and reasonably in seizing the branch of safety which truth offers him from the friendly shore."

"As the sole witness of this struggle between two such contrary influences, my heart hovers, hesitates, and trembles; come to my help, dear Abbé—come this evening at nine o'clock; I shall be at home."

You may be sure, dear reader, the good Abbé went as requested. His presence on the field completely changed the state of the combat, the evil genius, turned out of his entrench-

ments by the messenger of God, gave up his arms and acknowledged himself vanquished.

"You said well," cried the ex-officer, throwing himself on the bosom of the venerable priest; "nothing is impossible to him who changed a fowl into a carp, at the Hotel of the Palais Royal at Avignon."

"And who," answered the Abbé, "will to-morrow change a Huguenot into a Catholic."

Grace, operating on a soil prudently prepared, had worked the most consoling results; in fact, since his arrival in Paris, occupied only with this great affair, Ricard had opened his eyes to the truth, and closed them to the darkness of error; he was ready to enter the bosom of the Church.

"My friend," said the priest, on receiving his abjuration, "to the red ribbon which ornaments your neck, you require a cross of honor."

"Whose, father?"

"The cross of Christ; receive it from my hands, and wear it always in memory of me."

IV.

In the course of the many friendly conversations between Ricard and the priest, before the desired conversion, the former had often expressed a wish to see the travelling commissioner. "Your desire will be satisfied," the Abbé had said each time. "Your old adversary is in Paris. I know him, and I promise you, you shall meet him again before you leave, and shall finish, over a glass of wine, the combat begun at the *fle de la Bartelasse*." However, days flew by, and the expected meeting had not yet taken place. Ricard had fixed the time of his departure for the Thursday in Easter week, when one evening he received the following note:

"MY DEAR FRIEND:

"If you still persevere in your wish to see, before quitting Paris, the traveller whose life you so generously spared at *La Bartelasse*, come and dine with me to-morrow, at six o'clock.

"Yours ever,"

It was just striking six from the church of Saint Sulpice, when Ricard arrived at the Abbé's hotel. The dinner was ready, but only one guest had arrived.

"Shall we allow him a quarter of an hour's grace?" asked the Abbé.

"We will give him two," answered Ricard; "the distances are long in Paris, and business causes delays."

Half-past six arrived, and the expected guest had not come.

"Let us place ourselves at table," said the Abbé, smiling; "and do not look so disappointed, my dear captain. I promise you he will come."

Dinner was soon served. A magnificent carp, laid on a china dish ornamented with flowers figured at the first course. The guest thanked his entertainer for this pleasant remembrance of the past.

"Since I have known the history of your combat," said the Abbé, "carp is the fish I now like the best. I cannot help

considering it the mysterious apostle that Providence made use of to prepare the way for the saving of two souls."

"Of whose?"

"First of yours, for believe it, captain, one can never idly trifle with grace. The day when, as Protestant, you acted the part of a good Catholic, in giving an example of submission to the commands of the Church; on that day our good God blessed you, and opened your heart to the treasures of His grace, which you enjoy to-day."

"You spoke of another soul, whose is it?"

"Without doubt that of the travelling commissioner; of him, who despising and mocking all things, thought himself permitted to insult others, because he knew by heart the songs of Béranger; on that day, captain, the carp you had asked for in place of the fowl, only to satisfy the laws of a Church then not your own, that carp has, I repeat, acted a part in the story of your conversion greater than you suppose. Under the hand of God the greatest effects often arise from the smallest causes."

"You see that my old adversary will not come," cried Ricard; "for, if I mistake not, we are now at the dessert."

"Captain Ricard, look well at me, do you recognize me?"

"Yes, for an excellent and worthy priest, whom I esteem and love with all my heart."

"And on whom you wish to be revenged, captain. This is why; the adversary whom I promised you should meet to-day, is at this moment before you, glass in hand, to ask your pardon—"

"How! you are—"

"The irreligious and insolent traveller, to whom Captain Ricard, a Protestant, gave a lesson of tolerance and politeness."

Saying thus, the good Abbé threw himself into the captain's arms, who imagined he was the victim of some strange hallucination."

"Yes! it is I, look at me well," said the Abbé, and he related, as briefly as possible, the scene we have read in the first part of this story. At the request of the astonished captain, he completed his recital by explaining his conversion, which, from public conveyances and the high roads, had brought him to a seminary, and from a seminary to the sacred pulpit. "Since that day," said he, "I do not dine at three francs at the table d'hôte, but I teach men of faith and good-will the consoling truths of our holy religion. In a word, I find myself a hundred times happier, since the hymns of the Church have made me forget the songs of Béranger."

The two converts, forgetful of time, chatted in the most friendly manner until near midnight; the captain was the first to rise and take leave of the priest, whom he never saw again in this world. That zealous preacher departed six months after for the missions of the Levant. Captain Ricard is still living; he has retired from business, and resides in the country, in the possession of a moderate fortune, and in the bosom of an affectionate family. He never fails on days of abstinence to have a carp at his table.

An Incident of Sailor Life.

A FORMIDABLE French fleet left Toulon on the 16th of June, 1609, commanded by a prince of the blood, the Duke de Beaufort, to deliver Candia, which was besieged by the Turks. He had with him a C puchin, Father Zephyrin. The fleet, favored by beautiful weather, for some time slowly advanced. The admiral-ship, *Le Monarque*, preceded by a small brigantine, which served as a guide, was at the head, bearing with pride the banner of the Sovereign Pontiff. With the exception of a north-west squall, which snapped the topmasts of the Syrian when they were off the islands of Hyères, the passage bid fair to be most favorable.

The fleet had just left Cerigo, anciently called Cythera, to its left, and had doubled Cape Carobuca, which is the most easterly point of the island of Candia, when one morning the watch said that a signal from the *Thérèse* had been given announcing that a priest was wanted for a sailor who was seriously ill. Père Zephyrin knowing this, went immediately to the captain of the admiral's vessel, and asked him to give orders so as to enable him to fulfil the duties of his ministry.

"What you ask, father," said the captain, "is quite impossible!"

"As things are, those words are neither French nor Chris-

tian. Over there is one of our comrades dying; it is my duty to go to him."

"The man can die very well without you."

"That is exactly what he ought not to do."

"But I cannot take upon myself the responsibility of doing as you wish."

"Very well, I will go and ask the admiral."

"You must wait till he is up."

"Death does not wait, captain." So saying, Père Zephyrin went down into the Duke de Beaufort's room. The prince was shaving.

"Excuse me, my lord, if I come at so early an hour," said the chaplain.

"At whatever hour he may come, Père Zephyrin is always welcome," said the duke.

"Thanks my lord."

"What do you wish, reverend father? Something very important, since you come so early about it."

"It is something very important, indeed, my lord; a favor I wish to ask you."

"Which I am ready to grant. Speak, I am listening."

"One of our sailors on board the *Thérèse* is very ill, and desires the succors of religion, and I am come to ask leave of you to go to him."

"But to be able to do that, I must stop the whole fleet, which would keep us back two hours!"

"Two hours are less in eternity than two drops of water in the ocean, my lord. The salvation of a soul created to the image of God depends, perhaps, upon your decision."

The prince had just finished dressing. "What time is it, father?"

"Five o'clock."

"How long would it take you to go in a good boat to the *Thérèse*?"

"About three quarters of an hour."

"What kind of weather is it this morning?"

"Beautiful weather, although the sea is rather rough."

"We shall see," replied the duke, and, throwing a cloak over his shoulders, he went on deck.

"The sea is terribly rough, father," said the duke. "I would not allow you to expose your life thus in a mere boat."

"There is no fear, my lord; the sea knows me well, and the guardian angel of the sick man will protect me!"

"You persist then."

"I beseech you, my lord, allow me."

"Very well. Go, and may God protect you!"

At the same moment the fleet was stopped, and Père Zephyrin jumped into a boat, in which twelve volunteers were already seated, who began to row vigorously towards the *Thérèse*.

The boat scarcely swerved; it seemed to glide over the waves, leaving behind a white foam. The Duke de Beaufort followed with a glass the progress of these brave men, who, to save a soul, did not mind risking their lives. Courage and self-devotion! The whole of a sailor is comprised in these two words.

At last Père Zephyrin got alongside of the *Thérèse*. As he went on board all the sailors took off their caps—the sentinels presented arms—the captain came himself to conduct him to the sick man, who was in the infirmary.

"God be praised!" cried he, as he saw the captain enter, bringing with him the priest, "God be praised! And may God bless you, father!"

He was a brave sailor, who had often met Père Zephyrin; the father recognized him, and expressed to him those hopes of recovery which our lips often pronounce in presence of the dying, even when our heart does not respond to them.

"You come just at the right time, father; I feel I am going to die," said the sick sailor.

"I have seen people worse than you recover after all. One must never despair."

"I don't despair; but I feel that I must get ready to go to a country where every body goes, but from which nobody

ever comes back. That is to say, I don't think they——"

"Well my friend, since you asked for me I am ready to hear you." Then the sick man began his confession, which did not last five minutes. He seemed so piously resigned, and so generously sacrificed his life to God, that his confessor said, while administering to him—"Now, my friend, you can go whenever God calls you; you are quite prepared."

Upon a bed near to that of the dying man who had called for the assistance of God's minister, was another sailor, who, not being so ill, and having less faith, had laughed at his comrade for being so impatient to see a priest.

"Absolution won't prevent you dying," said he.

"Perhaps not," replied the other; "at all events it will prevent me from dying badly; and, if I had any advice to give you, it would be to do as I am going to do."

"To confess!—I, Pécard—surely you are joking!"

"There have been cleverer fellows than we who have confessed themselves before now, and have not been any the worse for it."

At that moment Père Zephyrin entered; he had now been three quarters of an hour on board the *Thérèse*. "I am going back again to the admiral's vessel," said he to the impenitent sailor; "won't you, too, take advantage of the opportunity?"

"I am not ill enough for that."

"All the better; you are in a more fit state to make a confession."

"I shall see later."

"Later! perhaps than it may be too late; better now than never."

"What should I have to say? I have neither killed nor stolen. I have always behaved like a brave and an honest sailor."

"So much the better, your confession will be the sooner over."

"If it would not inconvenience you too much, father, to come to-morrow at the same time."

"Supposing there were no to-morrow for you?"

"Well, in that case, I should not want a confessor; all would be over."

"In this world, but not in the next; believe me, my friend, to-day is yours—take advantage of it."

"And, besides," said the other sailor, joining his exhortations to those of the priest, "if you knew how much good a worthy confession and absolution does one, you would not hesitate a moment. Besides, the father is right; one ought never to put off till to-morrow what can be easily done to-day, for our hours are numbered. Now then, Pécard, you have lived like a good sailor, you ought not to die like a miscreant. That is all I can say."

"Very well, as both of you wish it, I must wish it too," said Pécard, who, after some preparation, commenced his confession. After it was over, "indeed our comrade was right," said he to the Capuchin when he prepared to go. "Confession is a pill which, once swallowed, does one uncommon good."

The sea was still rough; but, instead of having one angel guardian, he had two on his way back. The boat reached safely the admiral's vessel.

That evening the Duke de Beaufort received to dinner all the officers of his vessel. Père Zephyrin, with a joyful heart at having done his duty, was at his right hand; the captain was on his left. The meal was as usual seasoned by wit and champagne; for the Duke de Beaufort, the brother and friend of his officers, preferred joyous friendly meetings to the stiffness of cold etiquette; he possessed the rare faculty of making every body around him at home.

"By the way, father," said he to the Capuchin, while dessert was coming in, "you have told us nothing of your morning's expedition. I am sure the account of it would interest these gentlemen." At the Prince's invitation, the Capuchin briefly recounted, but much better than we have done, dear reader, his arrival on board the *Thérèse*, the scene with the two sailors, and his return to the admiral's vessel.

"Full success! said the Duke. "I am not surprised at

this ; you are accustomed to overcome hearts, and to sway the consciences of men."

The Capuchin bowed an acknowledgement of these praises, justified by the affection of all ranks of sailors which he had won, and said, "I forgot, my lord, to give you the messages these poor sailors intrusted me with."

"I am ready to receive them, reverend father."

"The two sailors to whom I administered the last sacraments told me to express, in the most lively terms, their gratitude to your royal highness."

"I only did my duty."

"They owe you, my lord, a sacred debt. They will pray God to pay it for them."

"Brave men ! Do you hear that ?" cried the Duke, glancing at the captain on his left. "You would have deprived me of a great satisfaction if I had not been there to give the order which you refused to give."

"Faith, my lord," said the captain, "I will frankly tell you that I did not dare to take upon myself the responsibility of stopping a fleet in full sail for one sailor."

"If the signal had denoted that the spiritual assistance of our reverend father was required for an officer, what would you have done ?"

"I should have considered the matter more attentively."

"Very well ; if the same signal had said it was for an admiral, for a duke, for the Duke de Beaufort, for instance ?"

"Ah, then, my lord," said the captain, "I should not have hesitated a quarter of a second."

"You would immediately have given the order which the Father desired ?"

"No doubt, my lord."

"And you would have done right, just the same as you have done wrong, in refusing to a simple sailor what you would have granted to me ; for remember, sir, before God, who is master of us all, the soul of a poor sailor is as precious as that of an admiral, were he a prince of the blood." After saying these words with a firm voice, the Duke rose, took his neighbor's arm, and followed by his officers, went on deck.

Shortly after this incident the Duke perished bravely under the walls of Candia.

TYBORNE:

AND

WHO WENT THERE IN THE DAYS OF QUEEN ELIZABETH.

"The white-robed army of Martyrs praise Thee."

CHAPTER I.

"*Roi je ne suis,
Prince, ni comte aussi,
Je suis le Sire de Coucy.*"

MOTTO OF THE COUCY FAMILY.

IT was a sunny morning in May, a pleasant breeze danced among the leaves of the trees in the long avenue, and gambolled among the flowers, while the sunshine tried its best to enliven the gloomy gray aspect of De Lisle Castle. It did not succeed there though. Not only was the place stern and forbidding in its warlike aspect of high walls, and wide moat, and "grim portcullis," but the ivy that clung to parts of the walls, and the long grass that grew in the court-yard, bore evidence of neglect and decay. As one approached nearer one might see the moat was dry, and entering within the walls there were still further proofs that the glory of the house of De Lisle was dim, if not departed. The stables were almost empty; not an armed warder was visible; the attendants were few, and generally old, evidently faithful servants, who had clung to the fortunes of a fallen house.

The ascent to Castle de Lisle was long and toilsome, for it had been built on one of the highest points, so that from its towers the surrounding country lay stretched out as in a map, and it was a fair scene; woods of rich foliage, a noble river, which wound its way calmly along till it reached the sea, that sparkled like silver in the distance, hill and dale, lay before the spectator's eye, and far farther than he could reach they were all the rich possessions of the Barons de Lisle. They had held the castle since the time of the first William, and their estates had often been added to by grateful sovereigns, for each De Lisle in his generation had been a faithful and loyal subject. They were a noble line, not only in long descent, but in knightly deeds. No stain of cowardice or of treachery, of avarice or baseness, had soiled their escutcheon. *Sans peur et sans reproche*, might have been also their motto.

In the great hall you might see the helmet and sword of the baron who fought by the side of Godfrey of Bouillon, and of him who followed Richard of the Lion-heart, and in the family chronicles you might hear of him who sat at Runnymede, and lent his voice to force a craven monarch to grant the rights of his people. And wherefore, then, this sad change? Has the line of De Lisle, like so many noble families of late times, failed in their heirs male, that their princely possessions are left desolate? Not so; no riches with curses clinging to them had soiled the hands of De Lisle. No ruined abbeys had been added to their possessions. No cries of consecrated spouses of Christ driven from their cloister shall meet them at the judgment-seat. But Edward Baron de Lisle had died a glorious death. He had steadfastly resisted the laws by

which he would have been compelled to forswear his religion. He was, with many other Catholic gentlemen, thrown into prison, for his high rank and station made the magistrates determined to set an example. While in prison, Lord de Lisle was attacked by one of the fevers which perpetually haunted the place; he died after a few days' illness, away from his wife and children, and without priestly consolations. Prison attendants closed his eyes, and arranged the shroud around the gallant form. It was a hard fate for him, in the prime of manhood, but he murmured not. "Mourn not for me, sweet wife," he wrote; "I die in a braver quarrel than did my fathers; I die for the faith of Christ. Sweet Jesu keep you, my fair wife; in Him I trust, to Him I confide my soul."

Alice Baroness de Lisle gazed on her two children in dismay. Her Walter, now Baron de Lisle, twelve years old, her Isabel, two years younger. How should she bring them up in the faith of their fathers? For Walter she saw but one course; he must go abroad to the college at Rheims, and there receive his education. Alice hastened to put her plan into execution, and scarcely had she done so when she learnt that instead of an act of attainder being passed upon the title and estates of De Lisle, the former was untouched; the latter, with the persons of the Baroness and her children, left in the guardianship of the Earl of Beauville, a distant kinsman. Then Alice heartily rejoiced at what she had done, for she knew well the earl would not have left a stone unturned to pervert Walter's faith.

This lessening of punishment upon the family of De Lisle was not to be attributed to clemency on the part of the Queen. The Earl of Beauville and the Baron de Lisle had been close friends in early youth, and though in manhood Beauville's profession of the Protestant religion had tended to estrange them, yet the bond of affection between them was very strong, and on hearing of his friend's death, Beauville was struck to the heart. He was high in the queen's councils, a man of talents and astuteness, whose value Elizabeth well knew, and by his intercession the bill of attainder was averted, and a chance given to the son to redeem the favor his father had lost. Another grace Beauville procured was to remove the body of the late baron to his own castle, where it was interred in the crypt beneath the chapel. His displeasure at discovering Walter's flight was very great, and he made frequent endeavors to induce Alice to recall him, but in vain. Shortly before our story opens his persuasions had assumed a more urgent form, from the fact that a new order concerning children educated in foreign colleges had been issued by the Privy Council. But no threat of penalty could move Alice from her purpose, and to his indignant letters she returned the same answer. Lord Beauville knew the jealous character of the queen too well to lavish favors on the baroness, and there-

* A king I am not, neither a prince nor a count. I am the Sire de Coucy.

fore all he had dared to do for her since her widowhood, had been to allow her a moderate maintenance, and to permit her with her daughter to remain in the castle, with a few attendants. All appearance of state was to be carefully avoided, and thus the building gradually assumed the appearance of decay we have described. Still as the servants who had remained were old and faithful, the family had enjoyed religious freedom compared with that of other Catholics in those sad times.

On the May morning we have described, on the broad terrace which ran on the south side of the castle, walked two maidens, both apparently about the age of seventeen. One was tall and slender, and her Norman cast of countenance, with her brilliant dark eyes and raven hair, spoke her at once a daughter of De Lisle. The other, who was shorter, had evidently more Saxon blood. Her tresses were of chestnut color, and her merry eyes of blue, and though inferior to her cousin Isabel in beauty, Mary Thoresby was a most winning creature.

The two maidens continued to pace together in silence, while Mary, occasionally stooping to pick some of the flowers that grew along the side of the wall, quickly wove them into a bouquet, and then, passing one arm round Isabel's waist, she held up the flowers to her face with a smile full of tender sympathy. Isabel smiled too, but said :

"Thanks, dear Mary ; oh, how I forget myself. How dull this visit must be to you. All the long journey you have taken to come and see us, and then to give you such cold cheer, is too bad."

"Darling Isabel, do not talk in this way. If I could only be some comfort to you."

"How do you think my mother looks?" said Isabel, in an anxious tone ; "tell me the truth, Mary."

"She looks very ill, Isabel," answered Mary, earnestly ; "she is so thin and worn ; but there is no actual disease, Rachel says ; and so may we not hope for better things?"

"No disease, save a broken heart," answered Isabel. "It is not often people recover from that, I fear." And the tears filled her eyes.

They had reached the end of the terrace, and as they turned again to pursue their walk they perceived an old serving-man coming towards them. He carried in his hand a letter, and, bowing respectfully before his young mistress, gave it to her.

"A messenger from the Earl of Beauville, Mistress Isabel," said the man ; "he is the first courier, he saith, others will shortly follow, and the earl and his train will be here by sundown."

Isabel took the letter. "Then, Roger, you must make what preparation is possible."

But when the man disappeared, Mary was alarmed at the look of anguish which appeared on Isabel's face.

"He comes to torment her again," she cried ; "to wear out her precious life in this vain strife ; he will kill her, I know he will."

"It is most cruel and inhuman," returned Mary weeping.

"I must go and prepare her for it," said Isabel hastily ;

"and you, dear Mary, will you tell the servants Lord Beauville is coming ? Imagine what we are to do for provisions !"

"I will go and consult with good old Bridget," said Mary cheerfully.

"Don't trouble your head about that, dearest ; we will provide better food and lodgings than our guests deserve."

They had been walking towards the castle while they spoke, and had now reached it. Mary, turning to the left, tripped away towards the kitchen and buttery ; while Isabel, with a slower step, began to ascend the broad staircase.

A wide gallery ran round the great hall, from whence doors opened. These doors did not all admit into apartments ; some led to narrow passages, which wound their way to different parts of the house. But the door which Isabel opened was that of an anteroom to one of the principal chambers. At the end of the anteroom a thick curtain of arras formed the entrance to the apartment beyond ; the floor was strewn with

rushes, and Isabel gathered up her long garments, that there should be no rustle, and advanced softly towards the inner room. She pushed aside the curtain and looked in. The room was spacious, and not ill-furnished, though an air of poverty hung about it. A cumbersome bedstead, with heavy curtains of faded crimson, stood in one corner. There were three windows, but all were shaded by curtains of the same hue. A couch was near one of these windows, and on it lay a lady asleep ; while near her, on a low stool, sat an attendant, of middle age, who looked round as Isabel entered, and laid her finger on her lips. Isabel stood still, and gazed on her mother with a beating heart.

Still on that countenance might be traced the loveliness of Alice Thoresby, fairest of the noble damsels that had graced Queen Mary's court ; though time and sorrow and sickness had done their work, and sharpened the chiselled features, and saddened the soft bright eyes, and silvered the fair locks, and robbed the bloom from the cheek and lip, yet still upon that face there dwelt a look of unutterable sweetness,—a light not of earth shed there its gleams. Presently, gently sighing, she awoke, and turned at once a loving glance on Isabel.

"Have you been on the terrace, my own child?" said Lady de Lisle. "I have slept so well and long, thank God."

"Yes, dear mother," answered Isabel, kneeling down beside her ; "I have been walking with Mary, and was interrupted by the arrival of a messenger with a letter from Lord Beauville."

Lady de Lisle's face assumed an expression of pain as she took the letter from Isabel. Its contents were brief ; merely that Lord Beauville, anxious to confer with Lady de Lisle on business, ventured to bespeak lodgings for a few days for himself and train, and also for a young and gallant kinsman who accompanied him.

"I fear me much," said Lady de Lisle, "he comes to endeavor once more to break my fixed resolution not to recall my son. Alas ! why such scenes rending a mother's heart ? Do I not yearn, with my whole soul, once more to hold him in these arms ? Could anything but the knowledge that it is not God's holy will induce me to forbear?"

"And Father Gerard, dear mother?" said Isabel inquiringly. The baroness clasped her hands.

"Selfish that I am, I had forgotten. What can be done? The time is so short ; whither can he fly?" And her weak frame shook with agitation and affright.

"Mother," said Isabel, "I think he is safe ; surely the earl is too honorable to betray us."

"Yes," returned Alice ; "but who is to answer for his train ? The reward offered for the capture of a priest is high and tempting ; his life is not safe here."

"A thought has struck me," said Isabel ; "let him go to Master Ford's house. Rose is here ; she passed me just now in the corridor. The distance is short, and he can go as serving-man, taking care of Rose ; and there he will be safe."

"Yes," answered her mother, "I think that will do ; we will suggest it, at least. Go you, Isabel, and seek our good father, and beg him to come to me forthwith."

Note.—A proclamation was set forth, commanding all who had children abroad to call them home by an appointed day. This was to compel parents to Protestantize their children.—*Madden's Penal Laws.*

"If any person shall pass or go, or shall convey or send, or cause to be sent or conveyed, any child or other person into any parts beyond the seas, to the intent and purpose to enter into, or be resident or trained up in, any priory, abbey, nunnery, popish university, college, or school, or house of Jesuits, priests, or in any private popish family ; and shall be there by any Jesuit, seminary, priest, friar, monk, or other popish person, instructed, persuaded, or strengthened in the popish religion, in any sort to profess the same ; or shall convey or send, or shall cause to be conveyed or sent, any sum of money or other thing for the maintenance of any child or other person gone or sent, or trained and instructed as aforesaid ; or under color of any charity, benevolence or alms, towards the relief of any priory, abbey, or nunnery, college, school, or any religious house ; every person so sending, conveying, or causing to be sent and conveyed, as well any such child or other person, as any sum of money or other thing ; and every person being sent beyond the seas, shall be disabled to sue or use any action, plaint or information in course of law, or to prosecute any suit in any court of equity, or to be committed of any ward, or executor or administrator to any person, or capable of any legacy or deed of gift, or to bear any office ; and shall forfeit his goods, and shall forfeit his lands during life."—*Burn's Ecclesiastical Law.*

CHAPTER II.

"The rod they take so calm
Shall prove in heaven a martyr's palm."

KNEEL.

ISABEL re-entered the gallery, and opening another door, she traversed a long winding passage which led to a different part of the castle; before a small door, which a stranger would hardly perceive, she stopped and knocked gently. A voice within bade her enter, and she did so, closing the door carefully behind her. The room was small, and almost bare of furniture, and bore an appearance of being a receptacle for lumber. There was, indeed, a wooden table and a few stools; but packing-cases—some open, some closed—were about in all directions. Near the table sat an old gray-haired man, with an open and benign countenance. He wore the common travelling-dress of the day, and opposite to him was seated a woman: she was wrapped in a riding-cloak, and the hood falling back displayed the head and face of a young girl; on the entrance of Isabel she rose, and, making a low reverence, prepared to leave the room.

"Do not go, Rose," said Isabel, "it is indeed well you are here; I was about to send for you;" and then going forward she knelt down at the old man's feet, and laying her clasped hands upon his knees, said, in a tone of distress, "Father, you must fly."

Father Gerard smiled as he laid his hand on Isabel's head: "Well, my child, it is no new thing, and I am ready; but I grieve to leave your mother. Tell me what fresh danger hath befallen us."

Isabel now related the expected arrival of Lord Beauville, and she ended her tale saying, "And father, there is no time for you to fly to any distance. We thought of Master Ford's; the tenants on our land are respected, you know, by Lord Beauville, and none of his train are likely to wander into such a retired spot; and Rose, I warrant me," she continued, turning her head towards the maiden, "will keep good watch, and then, dear father, when this visit is over, you will return to us, will you not?"

"Willingly, my child," said the priest, "you have arranged all well and kindly for me. Master Ford will, I know, gladly give me refuge, and God, and He alone, my children, will reward your charity towards me, His unworthy servant."

Neither Rose nor Isabel could answer, save by the tears that showed how dearly each prized the opportunity of ministering to his safety.

"Now," said Father Gerard, "I will to your mother's chamber; and how soon do you suppose, Rose, we ought to be going?"

"In about two hours, father, if it please you, not sooner, for it would excite suspicion along the road to see me return so speedily from the castle."

"True, Rose," said Isabel, "you have sharper wit than I, for I should have despatched you with all haste."

"In two hours, then, I will be ready," said Father Gerard; and the little party then separated.

On leaving the room, Father Gerard carefully locked the door after him, and took away the key; for in that little desolate room, full of dust and lumber, abode the Lord of Glory, the Redeemer of men.

Father Gerard went to the apartment of the baroness; Isabel and Rose did not follow him, but proceeded to the right wing of the castle, where they found Mary Thoresby busily engaged in aiding and directing the servants in their preparations for the coming influx of guests. Isabel and Rose gave their assistance, but after some little time, Rachel, Lady de Lisle's maid, came to summon her young mistress to her mother's room, and, "you, also, Mistress Thoresby," said Rachel, "my lady desires to see."

In the ante-room of the baroness's apartment, Father Gerard was standing.

"Isabel," said he, as the cousins approached him, "your mother is about to receive the last sacraments."

Isabel turned pale, she could not speak, but Father Gerard read what she meant, and answered—

"There is no immediate danger that I can perceive, my child, but your mother is, as you well know, very ill, and she cannot see me depart with the uncertainty as to when she can see a priest again, without receiving all the strength given by our holy faith."

"Oh, courage, Isabel," said Mary, "who knows but that the holy anointing may raise her up again, as it did our aunt, Lady Clare; you remember her wonderful recovery, do you not, father?"

"Indeed I do," answered the priest, "and many similar cases. Confide in God, my dear child," said he to Isabel, "and now go into your mother's room, and prepare it, while I go to bring the Blessed Sacrament and the holy oils."

Isabel silently obeyed.

"How great a blessing it is, father," said Mary, "that we have the Blessed Sacrament reserved."

"Yes, indeed," he answered, "and that we have been able to say Mass daily for weeks past, for all the household are Catholics, and trustworthy."

"Ah father," said Mary, sighing, "a few years back, and if you had needed to carry the Host from the chapel to the sick chamber of a Baroness de Lisle, we would have strewn flowers under your feet, and bells would have rung, and incense arise, as you passed along."

"Truly," he answered, "and in these evil days it is not permitted us to honor our Master by outward reverence; we must all the more be bowed in contrite inward devotion before His adorable presence, His wondrous atonement."

"What do you think of my aunt's state?" inquired Mary?

"That she is fearfully weak, and most unequal to the agitation of a harassing interview with Lord Beauville, but time is passing, I will now go to the chapel, and will soon return."

They shaded out the noonday glare with their curtain, they lit the two wax tapers, and spread the linen cloth on the simple altar; a few flowers, which Mary had hastily plucked, white roses and sweet jasmine, shed their fragrance round the spot where Jesus Christ tarried for awhile. Silent knelt the watchers round, while the holy rite went on; upon the wasted hands and feet, upon the eyes that had wept so many tears, the seal was set, given the strength of the last anointing, that raises many to life again, that carries others safe through the dark valley, and then at length, when His graces had come before, He came himself in lowliest guise: Alice de Lisle received her God. Then there was a great hush in that chamber, and they knelt and prayed on, as only the agonizing, and the persecuted, and the dying can pray. At length Father Gerard rose; he laid his hand on Lady de Lisle's head, she opened her eyes, and they beamed with light.

"Yes, father, I can part with you now."

He bent over her with an earnest look: "Do not forget me," he said; and then blessing her, he quitted the room. Soon afterwards, Rose Ford, seated on horseback behind a serving-man, was making all speed to her father's house, some six miles distant.

Mary and Isabel resumed their occupations in the household arrangements. Rachel sat watching her mistress, who lay perfectly still upon her couch. All fears and forebodings seemed to have passed away; upon her face was written a perfect peace. Rachel had occasion to come to Isabel for an instant, and she took advantage of it to whisper to her young mistress, "Surely it will raise her up again. We shall see her walk among us once more;" and though Isabel shook her head mournfully, still her heart echoed the same language: "To have her well again, surely then, I could bear all," said Isabel to herself.

It was a glorious sunset that evening, the sky was lit up with a deep-red glow, and bright colors played on the floor of the old hall, when Isabel and Mary descended thither to receive Lord Beauville, who was at that moment dismounting in the courtyard. The two cousins formed a fair picture, Isabel's luxuriant black hair was gathered from her brow, and her

hidden by her coif of muslin and lace, but the small ruffle did not hide altogether her white throat. Mary's face beamed with light and cheerfulness, while on Isabel's was written care and sadness, which did not, however, diminish her beauty.

The Earl entered the hall. He was a finely-formed and handsome man, generally considered stern-looking; but when, as at this moment, he smiled, every feature so entirely relaxed that one could but suppose the former expression more well-assumed and familiar than natural. Lord Beauville was leaning on the arm of his young kinsman, who was apparently about twenty years of age; he wore, as did also the earl, a riding cloak, and a low Spanish hat shaded his face. He did not follow Lord Beauville's example of uncovering as they drew near the ladies. Isabel's quick eye denoted this, and she was as quickly offended at the slight, but Lord Beauville was now saluting her, and she had also to present to him Mistress Thoresby, whom the earl was delighted to see, he said,—he remembered her as a child; and while these compliments were passing, the eyes of the young stranger were fixed on Isabel, with so intense a gaze as to embarrass her, and increase the offence she had taken. With the lofty air she could so well assume, she said:

"My lord, you will doubtless be glad to rest after your day's riding. Supper is preparing, and my cousin and myself will do ourselves the honor of supping with your lordship."

"Thanks, fair lady," said Beauville, raising her hand to his lips; "but, first, I have a boon to crave, that we retire into a more private room for a short space, for I have matters to confer upon with you at once."

Isabel, of course, could not refuse, and led the way into the first room leading from the hall. Great was her astonishment, when she saw the earl still followed by the stranger. She grew crimson with indignation.

"Let me present my young kinsman to you, fair Isabel," said Lord Beauville.

Isabel bent haughtily; the young man lifted his hat from his brow at last—why did he gaze at her in that strange, agitated manner? why that look of intelligence on the earl's face,—the light broke in upon her.

"Is it possible? Oh, do not deceive me!" she cried; but in that instant Walter de Lisle clasped her in his arms, and Isabel wept upon her brother's breast.

CHAPTER III.

"And when the morn came chill and sad,
And dim with early showers,
Her quiet eyelids closed; she had
Another morn than ours."—HOOD.

"Bring him to me, Isabel; my boy, my own," murmured Alice de Lisle, roused from her calm rest to hear the news her daughter brought.

Isabel called Walter from the ante-room; and in an instant he was kneeling by his mother's couch, and laying his head on her bosom. While she twined her arms around him, Isabel and Rachel left the room; mother and son were alone. For some minutes neither could speak.

"My Walter, my own boy! do I really hold you once more in my arms? It is eight long years since I parted from you, and I have scarce heard from you since. You have not forgotten me, Walter——"

"Forgotten you, mother!" he answered; "you have been in my heart by day and by night. Oh, how I have longed to see your face again! and truly, though I chafed at the manner of my coming hither, when I learnt 'twas to see *you* again, my anger vanished."

"How was it accomplished, Walter?" said his mother.

"It was my fault first, mother," said Walter, coloring; "for I was out of the college grounds, and in returning I lost my way, when a stranger accosted me and spoke in English, ex-

pressed great sympathy with the college, and asked many questions about it."

"And you answered them?"

"Oh no, mother; we are strictly forbidden to do so, and I was not going to be disobedient *twice* in one day; but the stranger, stopping at a house in the outskirts of the town, asked me to wait a moment for him, and then he would accompany me back to the college. While I stood waiting, two men came behind me and threw a cloak over my head and face, and bound my hands and feet, and bore me into the house. At night I was bound and gagged, put on horseback, and not till we were far out of Rheims would they release me, and then only after I had given my parole not to attempt to escape. From that moment I was treated with the utmost kindness and respect; we made all speed on the coast, and had a favorable voyage. On reaching London, I was taken to Lord Beauville's house; he frankly acknowledged the plot was his, but formed in kindness both to you and myself; and next day we commenced our journey hither. As I journeyed through France, mother, I had plenty of time to reflect on my conduct, and to see there was good reason for the strict rules against going into the town that Father Mordaunt has laid on the students, and bitterly to regret the consequences of my conduct; but then, when I thought of seeing *you*, I fear I was not as sorry as I ought to have been."

"It was very wrong of Lord Beauville," said Alice; and yet I feel powerless to blame him, when he has brought me this exquisite delight of clasping you once more in my arms. Let me look at thee Walter; art thou like thy father?"

Walter raised his head, and Alice gazed on a face of which any mother might justly have been proud. She brushed back the clustering hair from the broad fair brow; she looked into the depths of the dark eyes, sparkling with fire and vigor; she marked the finely-formed features, the radiant smile that lit up his face, as, bending down again after the survey, Walter kissed again and again his mother's pale cheek.

"I am selfish in keeping you here, my son," said Lady de Lisle; "you are tired and hungry; the household are at supper in the hall, you should join them."

"Oh no, mother, send me not away; to stay here is food and rest to me," said he, as he drew her closer to him.

So they passed their time, while their conversation went on in low and earnest whispers.

"And you were happy at the college?" said the baroness.

"Oh yes, dearest mother; very happy. The Fathers are, as you will believe, all goodness, and my companions all very dear to me. There are in the college sons of almost every noble Catholic house in England; and it is strange, dear mother, that the sense of exile, and the persecutions endured by our kindred in England, fail to sadden us. A gayer set you would see nowhere."

"I can well believe it," answered Alice; "for even here, in the midst of persecutions, fines, and imprisonments, that surround us on all sides, our spirits rise wondrously. It is because these sorrows make us despise time, and see the emptiness of worldly glory and renown, that can change so speedily with a monarch's breath. Are there any of the Travers' family at Rheims, Walter? Amy Travers is a dear friend of mine."

"Yes, there were two Travers there, but William has returned home, and only Basil remains now. He is preparing for the priesthood."

"The priesthood for Basil! Well, indeed, I should not have dreamed that; William was grave and scholarly, Basil was ever a roysterer, and the life of the old hall."

"He is a fine fellow; and fiery now in the great cause. Why, mother," said Walter, lowering his voice into a whisper, "he would be a martyr, if he could; the queen hath already put some priests to death for saying Mass, and Basil longs thus to die. Now, mother, a De Lisle was never a coward; I could die in battle, in fair and open fight, and even if unjustly condemned, as too many have been, I could meet the death of my peers on the scaffold; but like a dog, as they slay men at Tyborne—ah, mother, the very thought makes me turn cold!"

Alice's pale cheeks grew paler still. "God save thee from such a fate, my boy!" murmured she; "but yet honor beyond all praise those who are called to it: for surely to Him who died between two thieves, the very disgrace and obloquy you shudder at makes them dear in His eyes. But," continued she, rousing herself, "I will not have such sad talk the first evening to greet you with, my boy. Methinks I hear Isabel's steps in the ante-room. Will you go and see if she is there?" But as she spoke, Isabel and Mary entered together.

"Supper is over, then?" inquired the baroness.

"Oh yes, dear aunt, I am thankful to say it is," answered Mary; "it is a blessing to get rid of that terrible earl for a while."

"Has he frightened you, Mary?" said the baroness, smiling.

"Aunt, he is just like a hawk; sometimes he looks through you as if he longed to put you on the rack, and then"—Mary began to mimic his gestures—"he is so soft, pays such gentle compliments, oh, I did so long to say, 'Out with thee, hypocrite!'"

Isabel and Walter were both convulsed with laughing at Mary's ready mimicry.

"Poor Beauville!" said Alice, sighing; "he was a different being a few years since, open as the day, generous and noble; grievous has been the change. He follows now a shadow which will lead him to destruction. I must now, I suppose, prepare to see him."

"Not to night, dearest mother," said Isabel, in an alarmed tone; "when I was about to call even Walter away, for you looked so flushed and weary, and have endured so much to-day."

"But has he not asked to see me?" said the baroness.

"Yes, truly, mother, he did; but I told him you were too ill; and he would have lorded it over me, and said that he must see you—but," and Isabel's color rose, "he is not the master over all the castle."

Alice looked sadly at Isabel.

"Alas, my child," she said, "I ever sorrow when I hear you speak thus, and this matter brooks no delay. Go you, Walter, and beg Lord Beauville to visit me here; when he comes, I would be alone with him; but do you, dear children, remain within call."

"You are ill, indeed, Alice," said the earl, as he took the thin hand and gazed on the wasted form and features of the baroness, with evident emotion.

"Yes, Philip," said she, sweetly; "it is an illness that has no cure; and were it not for my children, I could rejoice it were so. But sit beside me now, for I have to thank you for a great delight, and yet to chide you sorely for giving it to me."

"I have been more merciful to you, Alice, than you would have been to yourself and your children. Had I not brought Walter home, the estates would have been confiscated, and a bill of attainder passed against your house; indeed, you are mistaken if you deem the queen means not to put her decrees into execution."

"I have no such hope," answered Lady de Lisle; "but you know well, my lord, that I count the lands and honors of my son as light in the balance with his honor towards his God. It is a cruel trial of faith and patience at his years that you have now exposed him to,—a trial I would fain have spared him,—and bade my pining heart, that craved so for his presence, be still and endure the pain."

"At his years?" repeated the earl. "Walter is twenty."

"And at twenty," replied Alice, "he is to be kept back from the companionship of the youths of his own age, excluded from the court and university, deprived of all the aims to which it is that natural youthful ambition should aspire."

"Tush!" answered the Earl, "why exclude him from the court, at least. He hath studied enough by this time; now let him win his way; and, with his grace and bearing I warrant you, Walter, Baron de Lisle, will, Papist though he be, ruffle it with the best among us. Elizabeth Tudor has her women's weakness about her, and the face of yonder boy will please her fancy marvellously well."

"Rather would I see him laid in his grave, in all his beauty and innocence," said Alice, "than send him to meet the corruption of Elizabeth's court. No, Philip; thither, with my consent, he shall never go."

"Now this is too much," said Beauville, starting to his feet.

"Wilt keep the lad here till he moulder into dust, or make him a shaven priest, perchance? God forefend; but by virtue of my office as guardian, I have power, and I say he shall go thither."

There was no answer; but as Beauville perceived the deadly paleness that overspread the face of the baroness, his anger fled.

"Nay, Alice," said he, sitting down again; "why dost thou anger me thus? Thou knowest I would not harm the boy."

"It is useless to argue," said she, faintly; "I know you have power; and if my words, my supplications,—if the memory of our early years, of my husband, your true and faithful friend,—can move you not, I have no other weapons to turn against you but my prayers."

"Well, well," said the Earl, soothingly, "let the matter rest awhile; we will talk more calmly anon. I was to blame for speaking thus roughly; but this religion of yours, Alice, does send you distraught, I verily think. I will leave you now, and to-morrow we will confer further. Fare thee well, sweet Alice," and he raised her hand to his lips; "do not judge me harshly."

Alice raised herself into a sitting posture; she fixed her eyes upon him as she said, "Philip, life for me has nearly run out its span! I stand on the borders of eternity, and see what you cannot now behold; but that hour shall come also to you, and as you hope for mercy on that day, deal fairly with my children; be true to them, God will be true to you; lay snares for them, and that hour shall come on you as a snare!"

She sank back fainting upon her pillows. Beauville called for assistance, and departed ere she woke to consciousness. When she recovered, she expressed a wish to see Walter again; but this was opposed by Isabel, who pleaded the lateness of the hour, and begged that her mother would suffer herself to be undressed and go to bed. Lady de Lisle was too feeble to contend; she yielded, saying, half to her elf, "Tell him to be strong—tell him to be strong!" When laid in her bed, she seemed much relieved, and sank instantly to sleep. This comforted Isabel, but not Rachel, who feared it was but a token of the utter exhaustion to which her lady was reduced.

"Go you to bed, Rachel," whispered Isabel; "I will watch beside my mother to-night."

Rachel was unwilling to go; but a look from her young mistress speedily reminded her that there was no gainsaying the will of Isabel de Lisle; and Rachel went to lie down, but not to rest, for she dreaded the effects, on the feeble frame of her lady, of all she had that day gone through.

The castle grew gradually quiet; steps and voices died away, and all was hushed. Midnight rang out its chimes; and the day, so full of events and of strong emotions, was past.

Isabel was used to watching; she regularly shared with Rachel the task of waiting on the baroness at night, when her illness was unusually severe. As the night wore on, she felt surprised at her mother's long continued sleep—so different from her usual restless starts and sudden wakings. Generally she required frequent nourishment during the night; now the wine stood untouched.

As the morning began to dawn, Isabel felt drowsy; and to shake it off, she stole to the window and looked out. The mist that precedes the sunrise veiled the landscape, but as she watched, it began to disperse; streaks of pink scattered over the sky and gathered in more brilliant hues towards the east; the first notes of the birds were heard; and soon gloriously arose the sun over the broad lands and fair woods of the De Lisles; far as her eye could reach over that wide landscape of wood and water, hill and dale, luxuriant and beautiful, spread the heritage of her fathers.

"And is it thus," she mused, "that the heir of these lands,

the lord of these possessions, has returned to his home—to ride at the rein of a Beauville, to be marshalled by him into his own castle, to be ordered hither and thither as he lists? What indignity! Oh, if I were but a man, the blood of De Lisle in my veins, would I not set myself free from this thralldom, and reign baron in my own castle?"

A slight sound in the room startled her; in an instant she was at her mother's side. Lady de Lisle still slept, but she turned on her side, and murmured something to herself. Isabel bent her ear close to her mother's mouth; she heard, breathed in half-conscious whisper—

"Æterna fac cum sanctis tuis in gloria numerari."

There was a strange sort of shadow on her mother's face; Isabel sprang to the door of the adjoining room; Rachel was awake, and in a moment was at her lady's bedside. They knelt in silence.

"She will wake," whispered Isabel; but there was no more waking to earth for Alice de Lisle; there was no agony, no death-struggle,—without a sigh she slept into death. The gray shade gathered now over that fair face, and the soul stood before its Judge.

Bright streamed the sun over wood and field; the sounds of wakening life, of earthly toil, and struggle and pleasure, were to be heard; but to Isabel's ears all sounds were dulled, save one everlasting chime that rang—

"Æterna fac cum sanctis tuis in gloria numerari."

CHAPTER IV.

"Mourn, therefore, no true lover's death;
Life only him annoys;
And when he taketh leave of life,
Then love begins his joys."

POEMS BY FATHER SOUTHWELL.

DEEP was the gloom that now fell over Castle de Lisle, and few have there been who were so deeply mourned as the gentle baroness. Many of the servants and tenantry remembered her arrival as a bride, or in the first glow of her short married happiness. They remembered, too, how, a few years after their marriage, when Isabel was still a child, the sun of her life had suddenly gone down, and left her alone and widowed; they remembered how sorrows had followed quickly on that greatest one, and how meekly all had been borne, how she had lived a life of retirement, of constant prayer, of frequent almsgiving; they had watched her steadfastness in resisting the temptations of worldly success, that would have drawn her from her faith; they knew that her death had been caused more by the pressure of mental anguish on a delicate frame, than by actual disease; and deep, though not loud, were the murmurs uttered by the servants and peasantry against Lord Beauville.

Isabel shed no tears for her loss. In silence and composure she performed the last sacred offices, arrayed the wasted body in its last earthly clothing, crossed the thin hands upon the breast, and sealed down the eyes, whose glances had been sunlight to her. She passed hours kneeling by the corpse, and gazing on the marble face, so lovely in its repose. She did not want sympathy, and she seemed to shrink from the sight of her brother, while all felt that the presence of Lord Beauville was more than she could brook; but to this trial she was not exposed. The Earl was deeply moved by the death of Alice de Lisle. His first sensation was one of horror at the part himself had had in the sudden snapping of the life of the gentle baroness; but this faded away. His heart was incrusting too thickly with worldliness for such emotions to do more than float on the surface. He turned from sad thoughts to occupation. He began to look narrowly into the state of the De Lisle estates; so that he could put them under charge of a trusty steward of his own, as he now designed to close the castle, retaining only a few servants to keep it in safety, and to convey his wards to his own house.

It will readily be supposed that the shock to Walter had been most severe: the cup of happiness had been placed to his

lips, that he might taste all its sweetness, and then dashed away. The fond visions of his boyhood were now never to be realized. In his dreams for many years past he had pictured to himself the fair face of his mother smiling upon him. Many a secret grief and joy had been treasured up to pour forth to her. The thought of seeing again his mother and sister had been far dearer to him than that of returning to his possessions, for the strongest passion in Walter's nature was human love.

The first night spent in his castle he had gone to rest with no proud or ambitious thoughts, but with the memory of his mother's kiss and blessing lingering with him like a spell. He awoke full of bright anticipations of the hours he would spend with her, of the comfort he would be to her,—he awoke and found her dead.

The second day after the death of Lady de Lisle, Mary Thoresby went into the castle gardens. There, fung on the ground, beneath a wide-spreading elm tree, she found Walter; his head was resting on his arm, and his whole aspect was one of the deepest despondency. Mary knelt down beside him, saying—

"O Walter! how I grieve to see you thus! Would that I could comfort you!"

"Oh! there is no comfort, Mary," said he wearily, "no comfort left on earth."

"If we could only have Father Gerard here!" sighed Mary. "I suppose it would not be safe to go to him?"

"Go to him!—where is he then?" inquired Walter.

Mary told him, and proceeded to relate all the incidents of the day of his arrival. Walter was aroused and interested; and when he heard that his dear mother had partaken of all the consolations of the Church for the dying, he shed tears.

"Oh! thanks be to God, a thousand times, for that, Mary; that she died not as many do, without priest or sacrament."

"Yes, indeed," answered she; "and surely in such evil days we may rejoice that one so good, and so patient, should be taken from them. Surely her bitter trials purified her even on earth, and now she has entered into the fulness of rest and joy. O Walter! we would not wish her back again on this weary earth, when now she can see His face."

"Yes, Mary," he said, in a choking voice, "I know it is selfish to have wished her to linger one more day on earth; but, oh, you can never know how I have longed for her, these many years past; how it seems as if, could I only have told her all that is in my heart, I could have borne it; and then, the bitterest of all is to know that I have had a hand in her death."

"Walter!"

"Well, Mary, Isabel deems it so."

"O Walter! you should not say such words."

"How can I otherwise interpret her manner? She shrinks from the very sight of me. Besides, it is true, Mary; the agitation of seeing me, the shock of my arrival; and the harassing interview with Lord Beauville, hastened, if not caused her death. I made Rachel acknowledge it, and I would rather know the truth. Oh! how bitterly do I now repent my rash disobedience to Father Mordaunt."

"Isabel," answered Mary, "is beside herself with grief, and does not know what she does. She shrinks from every one; it is her nature not to require sympathy; and surely we are always taught not to mourn over sorrows which we have not wilfully caused, but to submit to God's holy will, even when He makes us the instruments of working it out in a way we would not have chosen; and the words ever on your sweet mother's lips were '*Fiat voluntas Tua.*'" *

Walter hid his face in his hands, and made no reply.

"Walter, you must come and see us in Essex; if the earl would only let you, have your home with us for a while, how delightful that would be! Oh, you would like Thoresby Hall!—it is such a dear place, and has seen merry days, though now they are clouded over for a while."

Walter roused himself to answer, "Is it as old as Castle de Lisle?"

* "Remember us with Thy saints in eternal glory."

* "Thy will be done."

"Oh, no; that is, not the present hall; it was rebuilt by my grandfather, Sir Hugh Thoresby. Do you remember him, Walter, for he saw you as a child? He died not more than six years since."

"No," said Walter, "I do not recollect him; and how many of you are there now, Mary? You see, I have forgotten my relations while at Rheims."

"Not much chance of remembering them there," said Mary, cheerfully. "Well, at Thoresby you would find my father and mother, my brother Henry, and Blanche, my only sister; and she," said Mary, lowering her voice, as if she feared the rustling leaves overhead would hear the secret, "Blanche, is going to be a nun."

"Indeed!" answered her cousin, "and when?"

"In another year, at furthest, I think. We must be very cautious about it, as my father does not care to bring any fresh trouble upon us owing to this step; so we must wait till Blanche can find a safe escort, who will conduct her to Paris, where she will go for a visit to my aunt, the Marquise d'Orville, and from thence she can seek a convent."

"Has she fixed on any one?"

"Yes, the one just founded. You have heard of it, Walter, doubtless, it is so glorious—the perpetual adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. We are all glad Blanche feels called to this institute, for surely for an Englishwoman there can be no more suitable work than to make reparation for the insults our unhappy country is daily offering."

"Yes, indeed," said Walter; "introducing the queen's prayer-book instead of the holy sacrifice, and hunting the faithful priests who offer it into prison and death."

"Hush!" said Mary, suddenly; "there is some one coming."

In a few moments they were joined by Lord Beauville.

"Might I crave a few minutes' conversation with Mistress Thoresby?" said he, in his softest tone.

Walter departed, and Mary, with no little trepidation, found herself alone with the formidable Earl; but the interview did not prove an alarming one. Without committing himself in so many words, Lord Beauville gave Mary to understand that if she chose to arrange the baroness's funeral by night, and hide a priest in the house to perform the ceremony, he would engage that himself and his train should affect ignorance of the whole transaction, while their presence insured the latter against any molestation from the civil authorities. When the earl left her, Mary sought Isabel, but could not rouse her to the slightest effort, or to express any wish on the subject. Walter and herself made all the arrangements; and two days afterwards, Rose Ford, under charge of one of her father's yeomen, came to the castle; and in the same disguise in which he had quitted it, Father Gerard re-entered the home of the De Lisles.

At midnight, a little group gathered in the crypt beneath the beautiful chapel of the castle, now disused and desolate. It was deemed safer that the mourners should only be Rose and Rachel, in addition to the family. Slowly they recited the solemn office of the dead, so full of mingled awe and consolation; then the holy sacrifice was offered up; and at length they laid the corpse of Alice de Lisle by the side of the husband she had mourned so well for many long years. Walter's grief was passionate; and though for long he struggled for control, the barrier broke down at last, and he wept unrestrainedly. Mary, Rose, and Rachel mingled their tears with his, and even Father Gerard was overcome at times. Isabel alone remained unmoved; she shed no tear, uttered no sigh, not even when forever on earth was hidden from her eyes the form she loved so fondly. When the rites were concluded, all the little party of mourners, except Rose, were anxious to seek consolation from Father Gerard, as it was necessary that he should depart at an early hour in the morning. Isabel was the last to come to him, and she did it almost unwillingly, and with such a look of stony endurance written on her face that he would gladly have seen it exchanged for passionate grief.

"Do not, my dear child," said the priest, "exercise so

violent a control over your feelings; give way to natural grief. God does not forbid us to mourn—rather, He saith, Blessed are the mourners—if with our sorrow we but adore His holy will; and He whose submission never man equalled, had with it strong crying and tears. I would fain see you weep, Isabel."

"I cannot, father," was the answer; the words seemed to choke her, and she buried her face in her hands.

Father Gerard spoke of the baroness, of her patient life and holy death, of the perfect submission of her saintly soul to the loving and eternal will of God. "I firmly believe," said he, "she is with the saints in glory."

Still Isabel was not moved; Father Gerard's face grew very sorrowful.

"Isabel," said he, almost immediately, "we must part; and it is unlikely we shall ever meet again on earth. I am an old man, and it cannot be much longer that I can serve my Master in this world. Men seek my life: God grant, in His great mercy, that I may be suffered to lay it down for His sake. My child, over whom I have watched for so many years, listen to me for the last time. I have warned you before, Isabel, of that deadly enemy who tracks your path and lays snares for you. Beside your saintly mother's bed of sickness there was not much room for his temptations; but the case is different now, Isabel: you are going into scenes of fearful temptation. Firm must be your hold on the anchor of the cross if you would not fall. Isabel, beware of pride."

Isabel raised her head. "My *pride* would keep me from the fall you hint at, father. Isabel de Lisle is too proud to be a renegade from the faith of her fathers and the traditions of her house."

"Pride keep you close to the faith of the lowly son of Mary!" answered he. "Oh, never! O my child, lay aside that self-reliance, that haughty nature,—too proud to mourn, too proud to seek for aid. I would send a little child into the strife of life with more confidence than I would you."

"I thank you, father, for your trust in me. If I have hitherto been so unfaithful to the religion which none can profess without suffering, as to warrant you to speak thus with justice, I was ignorant of it. You blame me for controlling myself: methinks I need it. And such words from you on my mother's burial night!"

Isabel was burning with indignation.

"It is the night of our parting, and that forever," rejoined the priest; and he looked up where, through the narrow window, he saw the sun rising. "Something tells me that my time draws near. We must meet once more, Isabel; but then it will be too late for priest to warn. Will you not suffer me to speak, even in chiding truth, for the last time? I cannot speak falsely even to comfort you, Isabel, though my heart bleeds for you."

"Forgive me, father," said Isabel, bursting into tears; "forgive me for those sinful words. I know I am unworthy you should speak to me. Alas! without you how shall I live; how shall I ever struggle against temptation?" And then Isabel wept long and deeply.

The sun had now risen, and Father Gerard was warned he must not linger longer. The parting was brief, as partings with those who look not to meet again ever must be. Isabel, completely subdued, sought her chamber as soon as Father Gerard, bestowing a fervent blessing on his children, resumed his disguise, and quitted the castle with Rose.

CHAPTER V.

"She was a vision of delight,
When first she burst upon my sight."

WORDSWORTH.

Lord Beauville began to grow impatient of his long stay at Castle de Lisle, and neither Walter nor Isabel was surprised when he informed them it was his intention they should both accompany him to his house of Apsewell Court, situated some thirty miles from London.

"You must remember that you are my wards, by the queen's command," said the earl—informaton which both heard in silence.

Preparations for departure began to be made. Walter was really glad, he was weary of the gloom and painful associations of his home; and as he was not to be master, he felt it preferable to submit to the earl elsewhere than in his ancestral castle. Father Gerard's last advice had been to submit in patience, at least for a while, and Walter strove to curb the impulses of his fiery nature. The squire of Lord Beauville, who was to hold Castle de Lisle in safety, was also charged to receive the rents. This was a fearful blow to the faithful tenantry, Catholic to a man, and many resolved to give up their farms. Among these was Master Ford; for he clearly foresaw that the number of fines which he would be liable to for non-attendance at the Protestant worship at the parish church, and from which, under the new government of the estates, he could find no protection, would soon ruin him; and he deemed it wisest to employ the little money he possessed in starting some new occupation, whose obscurity should form his protection, and where he could sometimes enjoy the consolations of his faith; and with his wife and family, which consisted of two sons besides his daughter Rose, he resolved to go to London. Rose knew that her father's circumstances would be greatly impoverished by the change, and she bethought herself of offering to go as serving-maiden to some lady of rank; and having obtained her father's consent, she sought Isabel, to ask her advice how best to set about finding a situation. She found Mistress de Lisle sitting listlessly, as was her wont, over her embroidery, and taking not the slightest interest in the efforts of Rachel and Mary to carry away from the castle all the little articles of her own or her mother's which they imagined would be a comfort to her. When Rose told her errand Isabel was roused; she grew indignant at the thought of the sufferings of the tenantry, and at length she bade Rose wait for her, and quitted the apartment; and great was the astonishment of the earl, when he heard that Mistress de Lisle craved an interview with him.

She came, she said in her stateliest manner, to make a request: could she be allowed to take with her two serving-women?

"Well, Mistress Isabel," answered the earl, "it is an attendance beyond your rank; and I fear me our gracious queen, who hears things wondrous quickly, would mislike it."

Isabel colored with offended pride. "It is not for assumption of higher rank that I ask it, my lord, but I can never suffer Rachel, my mother's attendant to leave me, and I would fain take under my protection the daughter of our trusty tenant, Master Ford; it is necessary she should seek service, and for early friendship's sake (she was my playmate), I would have taken her with me also."

"Then let her go with you, by all means," said the earl. "My sister, Lady Anne, will, I warrant me, speedily find her a service with some lady of her acquaintance, and she can be under your protection meanwhile. I would I could pleasure you further, fair Isabel."

But Isabel was in no mood for soft speeches; and without deigning to thank Lord Beauville for the part of her request granted, she withdrew.

Unlike Castle de Lisle, Apswell Court bore every mark of a wealthy owner; around it were spread none of the hills and wooded valleys among which the former proudly stood, but the flat pasture-land bore signs of luxuriance, herds of red deer gambolled in the park, an array of noble chargers filled the stable, numerous retainers were seen in every direction. There was no doubt the sun of fortune was shining here. A large party of riders have arrived at the stately portico, and at the foot of the long flight of marble steps which lead into the grand entrance-hall.

"Welcome to Apswell Court fair Isabel," said the earl; "I will suffer no other hand than mine own to place you within its walls. Be assured," he continued, in a lower tone, "all that

can be done to supply what you have lost will be offered you."

Isabel bent her head, her only acknowledgement of a speech she deemed an insult; and with a cold and mighty air she ascended the steps and advanced into the entrance-hall. There stood two ladies ready to receive her; Lady Anne Beauville, an elderly and formal-looking dame, advanced slowly towards her, and ere she had reached her (for Isabel stood on the threshold), the path was intercepted, and Isabel felt herself embraced and her face warmly kissed by two rosy lips; and then releasing her not from her grasp, but looking full into her countenance, Isabel beheld a face whose witchery few could withstand. The hazel eyes laughed with glee, and in a voice of silver sweetness the owner of them said—

"Welcome, dear Isabel; I am so glad you are come—so very glad."

"Lady Constance," said Lady Anne, severely, "you strangely forget yourself in your father's hall. What must Mistress Lisle think of you?"

Constance would have taken little heed of this remonstrance, had not the surprised gravity written on Isabel's face assured her her conduct was not pleasing to her guest; she quickly disengaged herself, and stood by in silence, while Lady Anne with solemnity welcomed Mistress de Lisle to her brother's house. Isabel received the attention with equal distance, and then presented her cousin.

During this colloquy the earl and his train withdrew; but lingering in the doorway unobserved, was Walter, who was thus spectator of the whole, and marked the loving greeting and the cold repulse. Lady Anne now proposed that the guests should retire to their apartments; this was gladly acceded to, and Lady Anne, with Isabel, quitted the hall, followed by Mary and Lady Constance; the latter lingered behind for a moment, as if uncertain whether she should come, but Mary's sweet smile drew her to her side. Walter watched the whole, and inwardly thanked his cousin for endeavoring to repair his sister's want of courtesy.

A suite of apartments was assigned to Isabel, furnished luxuriously, as was deemed in those days. The windows looked out into the park, and the green fields in the distance beyond it; one also had a view of the courtyard, where the scene was bustling and various.

The cousins were alone, and Mary, tired with her journey, threw herself upon a couch. Isabel seemed insensible of fatigue; she paced up and down the room with impatient steps; her coif was thrown aside, and her luxuriant black hair streamed in masses upon her shoulders.

"Oh, dear Isabel do take a little rest; I know you are very tired, you look pale and you will fall sick, indeed you will."

"There is no rest for me," said Isabel; "I am not made for prison life, Mary; oh, how I pine already for my own mountain air! how this flat place wearies me!"

"Well," said her cousin, "in that I cannot agree with you, dear cousin; it is not so flat as Essex, where I have dwelt all my life."

Isabel made no answer; but she stopped in her walk, and laying her head against the window, looked out with the wistful gaze of a caged bird.

"Isabel," began Mary, "did you ever see any one so beautiful as Constance Beauville?"

"Oh, yes; many more so," said Isabel, in a quiet tone.

"Now, Isabel, surely that is impossible, for I do believe hers is the fairest form and face in all England; she is a perfect little fairy. I have heard it said that there is a look of the Queen of Scotland in her face sometimes, and that she is certainly like her."

"The Queen of Scotland is less fair than I have ever deemed her, then," said Isabel, scornfully.

Mary raised herself from the couch. "Dear cousin," she said, "I crave a favor from you; you know how truly I love you; suffer me to speak to you frankly and seriously."

"Willingly," answered Isabel, in the same scornful tone. "What have the times come to when Mary Thoresby turns preacher!"

"Well, said Mary, with unwearied sweetness, "since I am so seldom a preacher, it is but fair you should listen to me when I do hold forth. I would say, then, Isabel, you who are so noble and generous in mind, I pray you not to let prejudice destroy your peace here. Why should you scorn Constance Beauville? her greeting this day was full of affection. How can you gain influence and win your way here save by conciliation?"

Isabel drew herself to her full height. "Mary Thoresby, do I hear you aright?—I win my way here! I—a prisoner?—what owe I to those who keep me against my will? Nothing. To dwell here patiently is all you can ask of me, deprived of friends and of the exercise of my religion. I will live in these rooms with Rachel, in as retired a way as possible. I do not want the hypocritical affection of the Beauville family, nor will I stoop to dissemble with them."

"I do not ask you to dissemble," returned Mary; "I know well how hard is your lot, how much you have to endure; but surely it is not right, nor wise, to reject the kindness that is offered, however much injustice may be mingled with it. And think of Walter also; he will not stand aloof as you do; and think how necessary it is that you and he should act in the same manner."

"Walter," burst forth Isabel, indignantly, "may choose his own path, and I pray he may not repent it; but ask me not to share it. It has well-nigh maddened me to see at De Lisle Castle how he would stoop to Lord Beauville's will. Oh, would I were a man, and the earl should see what a De Lisle should, and should not brook!"

"You wrong Walter," answered Mary; "he has as noble a spirit as ever breathed in his race; and I am certain it is by the advice of Father Gerard he has acted."

The name quieted Isabel. She was silent for a moment, then said, "There is enough of this, Mary; do not let us dispute just when we are about to part; you have done right to speak your mind, and now no more. I will act as appears best to me." And Isabel left the room to give directions to Rachel, and was, at all events, roused by her cousin's remonstrance from her despairing mood for the time being.

Mary felt it was indeed useless to say more, and even regretted she had gone so far. Her admiration for her cousin was so great that, though it did not prevent her from seeing her faults, it gave her great faith that her noble spirit and sense of right would in time triumph over prejudice.

CHAPTER VI.

"But for my sister Isabel,
The mood of woman who can tell."

LORD OF THE ISLES.

"Are you really going, Mary?" said Walter to his cousin, when he met her in the early morning of the following day in the gardens of Apswell Court.

"Yes, indeed I must, Walter; if the escort comes, as I think it will, this evening, I must bid you all farewell to-morrow."

"I think," said Walter, "that I will go forth and mislead the escort, tell them this is not Apswell Court."

"Ah!" laughed Mary, "trust the Thoresby wit for that, my Lord de Lisle."

Walter's smile passed away. "I shall miss you so, dear cousin," he said, tenderly.

"Well," said Mary, cheerfully, "I cannot wish that you should not miss me, for a while at least; but I trust shortly matters will look brighter, and your sojourn here become less tedious."

"Why must you go so soon, Mary?"

"My father does not wish me to stay long as Earl Beauville's guest; and besides, he is able just at this moment to send an escort for me, which is not always in his power, for you know we are not the rich Thoresbys now. Walter, I have set my heart on your coming to Thoresby Hall. I feel certain you are to come some day."

"Yes," said Walter, "I will come, Mary; I promise you I

will; it cannot be so difficult an undertaking but that a firm will can compass it."

"I suppose you can hardly tell me yet how you like this place."

"Yes, I can, Mary," returned he; "I am very wretched; I do not see how it can be otherwise. Lord Beauville's train is thronged by young gentlemen of good birth, who hope to win their spurs, or gain advancement, from being his attendants; but to mix among them, and not to forswear the worship of God, is impossible."

Mary shuddered. "I have heard my father say that the licence allowed in noble households, of those attached to the court, is fearful."

"Fearful," answered her cousin, "and loathsome! Brought up as I have been, Mary, at college, among learned and holy men, it revolts me to hear the coarse and ribald talk that met my ear last night."

"And can you not avoid it in any way?"

"Yes, in one; pluming myself on my birth, I can show that I condescend not to mingle with those a step below me; but then, Mary, it will be solitude, entire and unbroken."

"Come, come, Walter," said Mary, "be like a brave knight and good Christian, and fight manfully. You want not me to preach to you, after all the lore you heard at Rheims; but I heard it once said, that when God sends trials thick on us, He treats us as a general does his most trusty soldiers,—he puts them in the dangerous parts."

"You say truly, Mary," exclaimed Walter, with brightening tone and manner, "and I will fight my best, and not be a coward in the battle. This is the last complaint I will make, and as you are going away, Mary, I shall have no opportunity."

"So you only desired my stay that you might grumble to me, most noble baron;" and both the cousins laughed merrily.

In the very midst of their mirth, turning round a corner in the walk, came upon them the Lady Constance, fresh and beautiful as the roses she carried in her hand. She blushed, and curtsying with grace, almost stateliness, said "she was sorry to interrupt them," and would have passed on, but Mary prevented her.

"I depart to-morrow, Lady Constance," said she, pleasantly, "and I shall feel as if I knew nothing of one who is to be my cousin's friend."

Constance being nothing loath, the three continued their walk together, and blithely ran their tongues, as they discussed the various amusements of the day, keeping carefully away from the dangerous topics of religious or court news.

"I fear you will find Apswell Court a very dull residence," said Lady Constance to Walter; "for since my brother went abroad, and my father is so much at court, it has grown quite different from what it used to be. We had merry days when Regnier was at home."

"Viscount Regnier is your only brother, I think," said Mary.

"My half-brother," replied Constance. "We are both our mothers' only children." And then, quickly, as if anxious to change the subject, she exclaimed, "Mistress Thoresby, I do so envy you one thing."

"What is that?" inquired Mary, with a smile.

"That sweet-looking serving-maiden of yours; I have never been able to get one I liked."

"I should be truly glad if you would have this one, then," returned Mary; and she hastened to explain that Rose did not belong to her. "I travelled without an attendant," he said, "to De Lisle Castle; and as for Rose, I believe this very day Lady Anne will be besought to find a service for her, since Rachel, the elderly one, is to attend upon my cousin."

"Then it is settled at once," said Constance, eagerly. "I am so glad: will you send her to me presently, Mistress Thoresby, and I will arrange the wage with her, and other matters, and (as soon as suits Mistress de Lisle's convenience) she can enter on her attendance? But I hear sounds that announce the dinner hour; is it indeed ten of the clock? I thought it not so late."

Lady Constance departed. Mary gazed after her for a moment, and exclaimed, "How very lovely she is!" She turned to her cousin again, but Walter's eyes were fixed on the path Constance had taken, with so riveted a gaze as startled Mary.

"Lovely!" he said; "methinks I never saw aught so fair on earth."

Mary sighed to herself as she left him, and went towards the house, "Is this to be his trial, poor boy? It is most cruel if Lord Beauville keeps him here in inaction, with nothing to think of but that witching face."

Mary informed Isabel of the good prospect which had offered itself for Rose. To her astonishment her cousin was mightily displeased.

"I would have spoken about her myself to Lady Anne, had I been allowed the time."

"But, Isabel," said Mary, "what could Lady Anne procure for her better than to wait on Lady Constance, and to stay in the same castle with you and Rachel, too?"

"Well, well," said Isabel, "it is arranged now of course; I would not so have chosen, as I said, and there has been too much hurry."

When Rose heard what her future destination was to be, she was delighted. "Not to have to leave the house you are in, Mistress Isabel," said she, "and to wait on that lovely Lady Constance, who looks so meek and gentle, I am happy, indeed."

Isabel's face clouded over, and she expressed no opinion either of satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

When Mary took leave, Isabel melted for the moment, and held her fast in her embrace.

"Forgive me Mary," she whispered; "I have tried your patience sorely, I know."

Mary kissed her fondly, as she assured her of her love and sympathy; and with fervent hopes that they should meet again ere long, they parted.

Walter put her on her horse.

"Farewell, dear cousin," said he; "Heaven bless you for all your goodness and comfort."

"You must come to Thoresby, Walter. Now promise me you will."

"Yes, I promise," said Walter. His last words were, "I will come to Thoresby."

Mary rode out of Apswell Court; Walter stood on the steps watching her, and Isabel, from her window, followed her with wistful eyes. So they parted.

The time passed heavily at Apswell Court after the departure of the cheerful and peace-making Mary. Isabel, true to her resolution, confined herself entirely to her own apartments, only appearing at dinner and supper, and then studiously avoided joining in the merriment that generally went on. Very often she took her meals in her own rooms. Lady Anne considered her conduct insulting, and showed it by taking no further notice of her than a slight and stiff bend of her head, morning and evening, which was as stiffly responded to on Isabel's part. Constance, kept at a respectful distance by Isabel, naturally grew cold in her manner, though her kind heart felt for, and made excuses for Isabel, pitying her loneliness, and the heavy afflictions she had gone through. Constance had never known her own mother, who had died in giving her birth. One of the strongest feelings of her nature was her love for the mother she had never seen, and many were the tears she shed over the beautiful but sad-looking portrait of the Lady Constance Courtenay, Countess of Beauville, which hung in the long gallery. She could the better pity Isabel, who had known the sweetness of a mother's love, and lost it for ever. Lord Beauville treated Isabel with studied indifference, and this galled her. She would rather have met with resistance, and would willingly have measured her strength of will with that of her guardian. She was never required, as she had expected, to attend the prayers and sermons in the chapel; neither did Master Gregory Oldcastle ever approach to entertain her with godly discourse on

the errors of papacy; in truth, the haughty bearing of Mistress de Lisle kept the chaplain in too great awe of her to make such an attempt.

It may seem strange that so proud and stubborn a character as Isabel could have grown up under the teaching of the meek and saintly Alice de Lisle; but Isabel's strongest element was her affection—an affection apt to expend itself on one object, and with the true selfishness of all fiery passions, on an object which must be dependent upon her. Lady de Lisle was all in all to Isabel; her pleasure was hers; she lived but in her presence, and she proudly felt that she was to her mother solace and counsellor, nurse and protector; and yet Isabel's love though it bore the aspect of the most unselfish devotion, was selfish. She could bear no other object to attract her mother's notice, or that she should lean on other aid than hers. In De Lisle Castle, Isabel had ruled with undivided sway; no one dared gainsay her will; and Isabel, who was most noble and just in her dealings with inferiors, never gave real cause of complaint. Thus her faults grew up unchecked and unnoticed, save, indeed, by Father Gerard, but he, in his few and hurried visits to the castle, had little opportunity to do more than warn her solemnly, and the warnings were ever received in the same way, with self-defence, broken down at last into violent grief, which passed away and left no trace behind; rather Isabel secretly consoled herself with thinking that Father Gerard was so severe to himself he had no mercy for others, and misjudged her harshly.

And so Isabel went on in self-deceit, deeming that her present conduct showed fitting respect to her condition, and was a protest against injustice.

After Mary's departure, Walter sought his sister, and with a patience very hard for one of his impulsive nature to attain, he strove to break down the sort of barrier that had arisen between them. He thought he had succeeded. Isabel's sternness relaxed; and the love that was really in her heart for her brother began to show itself; but there was one condition, Walter must join with her in the line she took towards the Beauville family; and Walter would not. With an impulsiveness and a guilelessness which made him a boy for his years, Walter had a keen perception of right and wrong; his training, so different from that of his sister, had taught him to submit to lawful authority, and he knew Lord Beauville had not at present exercised his authority beyond its lawful limits. He told Isabel so, and she drew back into her stately distance, and treated him at once as joining in the league against her.

Poor Walter wandered disconsolately about, and heartily wished himself back at Rheims, with the hardest day's work before him he had ever performed, rather than have to drag through these tedious hours at Apswell Court.

CHAPTER VII.

"Her love to him,
Before a spark of his grew dim."

WILLIS.

MASTER GREGORY OLDCASTLE, although he did not dare to broach the subject to Isabel, had not any fear of Walter, and was very desirous of proving to him the utter corruption and horrors of the Church of Rome. Walter did not shrink from the encounters, and indeed rather enjoyed them; and when they had taken place two or three times, there was no doubt he had reason to do so, for Lord Beauville desired Constance should be present, and hear how well Master Oldcastle could defend his cause; and so oftentimes Constance, attended by Rose Ford, sat in the garden at her work while Master Gregory and Walter recommenced the strife. Walter's whole spirit was thrown into his argument; he was well instructed in controversy, and possessed great natural clearness and eloquence. Many a peal of laughter sounded the discomfiture of Master Oldcastle elicited from Constance. At other times she would lean forward, her whole attention absorbed in the contest, her embroidery falling from

her hands, her eyes fixed on Walter, who stood, a picture of energy and vigor, tossing back the dark locks from his brow, his eyes radiant with light and eagerness, and his face in one glow; and she felt that from his heart flowed every word of his gallant defence of his holy faith. It was no task learnt by heart, as Master Gregory's (albeit he grew heated enough on the subject) appeared to be.

Often after these contests, Lady Constance would call on Walter to explain some point she had not understood, or to translate some Latin quotation; for the little lady was not to be numbered among the learned ladies of her day, and her awe of Isabel was sensibly increased by finding she understood both Latin and Greek. It may naturally be supposed that these conversations generally wandered from theology to lighter subjects. Constance loved to hear of Walter's college life of his studies, his emulation there for fame, and the pleasures and frolics which he had shared with his companions; and in return, Constance related anecdotes of her childhood, great part of which had been spent within the atmosphere of the court. She knew all the men whose names were then great in the world; and she could describe many a brilliant pageant and royal progress; in such converse hours slipped away. Neither the earl nor Lady Anne interfered in this intercourse; the latter left her niece to do as she listed in this as in all her other pursuits; while the former did all he could to encourage it. Whenever Lady Constance rode forth, Walter was sent to the side of her palfrey; he sat by her side at supper; he became her regular escort wherever she went; and so the days went by of the bright summer at Apswell Court. But the time did not hang heavily on Walter's hands; all day long he was occupied either in contriving something for her pleasure or in her society. At night his dreams were of her. Walter loved with all the vehemence of his youth and all the strength of his nature; his life became wrapped up in her. He made an idol, and fell down and adored it. For some time he never wondered whether his love was returned. In itself it was happiness enough; and when the longing to be loved again did come, Walter feared to speak lest he should break the spell. Was Constance unconscious of the love she had inspired? She was court-bred; young as she was, she had imbibed some of the poison of that hollow worldliness which pervaded those of the Tudor sovereigns above all other courts. She had learnt how cheaply love, and truth, and honor were held; and for some time Constance trifled on, forgetting in the amusement of the hour the misery she might be bringing on Walter; but there was too much that was generous and good in Constance's soul for this frivolity to last; the nobleness of the heart that was cast at her feet grew daily upon her, and Constance loved, not with the idolatry she received, but warmly, deeply, and sincerely Constance loved.

Lord Beauville had gone to court, and their love was yet unspoken, though each knew well the other's secret, and rejoiced in the knowledge.

Isabel now withdrew entirely from the society of the Lady Beauvilles; she could not endure to see her brother tamely and blindly yielding himself a dupe to Lord Beauville's schemes, for she doubted not that the earl allowed his daughter to give encouragement to her brother only to let him have the mortification of being refused; for to allow his only and beautiful daughter, who might ally herself to the highest houses in the kingdom, to marry the penniless and proscribed Baron de Lisle, was impossible. She dared not remonstrate with Walter, for the distance between them was too great now. She sighed over the estrangement, without being conscious she had caused it.

"It is as I foresaw," mused she; "he would not take my counsel, would not lean on me, and this is the result."

The earl came home somewhat unexpectedly; and as he sat at supper that night, he seemed disinclined for conversation; but his glance passed often from Constance to Walter and from Walter to Constance, till the former felt embarrassed. When alone that night, Walter determined the

following day he would tell his story of his love for Constance to Lord Beauville. He was not utterly blind to the possibility of a refusal; but when he reflected on the evident encouragement the earl had given to hopes he must have known but too likely to spring up, his courage rose. Walter was sanguine, and lovers look not beyond the present; he went to sleep, to dream of Constance.

At an early hour the following day, while Walter was deliberating what would be the best time for him to seek Lord Beauville, he was summoned to the earl. He found him in his private cabinet, employed in writing, and surrounded with papers and letters, for he had a heavy charge of state affairs, and a great share of the queen's confidence.

"Ah, Walter," said he, turning round so as to face him "I desire some converse with you. Dost thou hast been here full six months?"

Walter started. "Is it indeed, so long?" said he as he remembered that spring had indeed passed into summer, and summer begun to yield to autumn, and it had seemed one short day to him, who had so sighed over the loneliness and tedium of the first few weeks.

"It is too long since your mother's death," answered the earl, "for you to be able longer to plead that excuse for retirement from court; you must now present yourself before the queen, and endeavor to win her favor."

"But can I appear before her in my own title, my lord?"

"Most certainly you can; you have now only to come forward, and by swearing fealty to Elizabeth, you can hold both your title and estates."

"Swear fealty!" answered Walter; "if that is all that is required, I am willing and ready to make all the reasonable submission that a sovereign can require of a subject; but I had deemed far more was asked than this."

"When I say swear fealty," said the earl, "I do not mean saying the oath with your lips, but ranging you self among those faithful followers who a jure all that can hinder their devotion to their queen. Those who hold an Italian prince as greater than an English-born sovereign, are no true and loyal subjects."

"I understand you not, my lord. In all temporal matters I will serve Elizabeth Tudor; but I will never for wear my religion, and confess that the keys given to an Apostle long ages ago are now fallen into a woman's hands."

Walter drew himself up when he spoke; he was arming himself as if for a contest with Master Gregory. The earl fixed his keen eyes upon him.

"I had deemed differently, Walter de Lisle; observing, as I have done, certain passages between you and Lady Constance. Dost mean me to understand," continued he, his voice growing hoarse with anger, "that to trifle away thy time, thou hast dared to act the suitor to a daughter of mine?"

"Lord Beauville," he answered, "this very day I would have sought you to tell my tale. I love the Lady Constance with my whole heart and soul; the earth she treads upon is dear to me."

A momentary expression of anguish passed over the earl's face; but he answered, "I do not perceive your meaning; what proposals had you to make, if you intended to seek the hand of Lady Constance Beauville?"

Walter raised his head proudly. "My lord, a De Lisle might wed with the noblest house in Europe, and bring no stain on their escutcheon. You know well the injustice of the law which deprives me of my inheritance; give me Constance for my wife, and let me seek a foreign court, where my rank will be recognized."

"I would sooner see her dead at my feet than send her an exile to a foreign court. No, Walter; there is but one path—take your place, as it is offered you, among the peers of England; an alliance with this house would not prejudice you in the eyes of Elizabeth, and, believe me, to no man on earth would I sooner commit my child. To-night you shall see Constance, for it is but fair that you should learn what she has won her favor. I am no tyrant Constance shall

marry the man she loves, for I know my child will love no one who is no noble, true, and fitting for her alliance. I return to court in three days: ere then I must receive your answer, for, save as the accepted savior of my daughter, with your present feelings, Apswell Court is no fitting place for you."

Soon after Walter had quitted the apartment, the Lady Constance was summoned thither, and remained for a considerable time alone with her father. Meanwhile Walter spent the day wandering restlessly about and counting the hours ere he could see Constance. He was not cast down; lover-like, he put all his trust in Constance. "She shall marry the man she loves," rang in his ears. "If she loves me, he cannot refuse, he cannot part us;" and Walter had not much uncertainty. He believed Constance, as the type of all womanly perfection, incapable of trifling; and Walter's nature, like all true ones, was full of trust in others.

The short autumn evening was closing in, the gorgeous hues of the sunset yet floated in the sky, and on the distant horizon the moon was rising, when Walter and Constance met beneath the shade of the trees of Apswell Court. What needs it to linger on that meeting? Then was whispered the story that, so very old, is still ever new, as the world goes on. They loved each other, and in the first bliss of the acknowledgment the future was forgotten.

"Constance, my own," said Walter at last, "have you seen the earl, and do you know what passed between him and me this morning?"

"Yes," she whispered, drawing closer to her lover; "he told me all, and bade me come hither this evening."

"He cannot mean the cruelty he threatened," said Walter; "he will not part us now, my Constance?"

"Dear Walter, my father is very firm; I fear me, if you will not comply with his conditions"—she hesitated.

"But, sweet Constance, he has not, then, told you all; you would not honor me with your love if I were a recreant to honor and faith?"

"But, Walter, listen," said Constance, sweetly. "I know the court, and you do not; there are hundreds there Catholics in heart, though Protestants in outward seeming. Nay, am I not nearly that myself, for your eloquence has well nigh converted me?"

"Has it, darest?" answered he; "then surely there is no reason why we should not cast our lot together, and seek a land where we may worship God in peace, and wait for brighter days to dawn over this unhappy land."

"Alas!" said she sadly, "I know my father too well; his word once passed, will not be broken. And consider, Walter, the disgrace and ruin it would bring on him. The queen would banish him at once, perhaps do even worse. Oh, no, Walter, it is we who must submit."

"But Constance cannot ask me to stoop to dishonor?"

"Dearest, it is not dishonor. Surely the prisoner who feigned in order to outwit his jailer, and escaped, would be fully justified; and England now is one great prison, where we dare not say or do as we list, but as pleasures the queen. Walter, you have such wild notions," continued she looking playfully up at him, "fit only for the times of the crusades; this is what half the world does now, why should you scruple?"

"If it were lawful, my Constance, we should not see half the nobility of England exiled from the court, fined, imprisoned, and in constant suffering. Men are not so in love with all this as not gladly to escape from it, if conscience permitted. No, Constance, my beloved, do not urge me to do that which you yourself would hereafter despise me for."

Constance endeavored to disengage herself from the close embrace in which she was held.

"It is time we part, then," said she, as haughtily as she could.

"Constance, you will not leave me in anger?"

"I have tarried too long," said she. "It is not a maiden's part to be rejected."

"Constance, have you no mercy?" said he, in a tone of anguish; "it is my honor and my faith that stand between us."

"No, no," said she, "it is not so; let me go. Walter; choose quickly between my love and happiness, and the vision of honor you conjure up. I will never disobey my father. Seek me as he bade you, or seek me not at all. We part for ever."

She was gone.

He watched the flutter of her white dress along the terrace. He saw her lean on Rose, who had been waiting at a distance. He saw her gather the flowers as she went along, and thence she mistook she came down at her feet. She stood for an instant on the steps, and the moonlight cast an unearthly radiance on her snowy robe and golden hair. She looked like some vision from fairyland, as she disappeared within the house. He followed the path her tiny feet had trodden; he picked up those scattered leaves of autumn roses, and laid them next his heart, and then he went to his own chamber, went to the struggle with himself for life or death. The breeze whistled blithely by that cool bright evening; the round of life went on, but though mortal eyes saw them not, and mortal ears heard them not, intent upon the scene, bent the gaze of heavenly intelligences, and keenly they listened to every sigh and groan that burst from the aching heart in Walter de Lisle's lonely chamber.

Differently in truth, was that night spent by the betrothed. Constance never entertained the thought of losing her lover. She was flushed with triumph, she had performed her father's behest—reited Walter's arguments, and she did not doubt the next day would bring him a captive to her feet, and she pictured to herself bright visions—how the Barons de Lisle would comport herself in the proud court of Elizabeth, how rapidly Walter would advance in favor and trust, and how, through it all, she would be the star that led him on, the best cherished of that noble heart.

The light in her eye, and the smile that sat on her lips reassured her father that victory was secure, so that though Walter was missed from the supper-table, he did not feel anxious.

No, Walter did not sup that night, neither when the weary inhabitants of the house sought their beds did he follow the example. Constance slept soundly, smiling in her sleep.

On the ground, fighting with his anguish, lay Walter de Lisle; close beside was the invisible tempter, busy at his work.

"But for a little time," he whispered. "Elizabeth must ere long recognize the rights of her Catholic subjects, and queens do not live forever. Can you not even secretly serve your party by your influence? Deceit, oh! call it not by that name, it is not that; it is understood by everybody in these days, when religion has changed with each Tudor that has sat on the throne; it is only a sample of yours thus to relinquish all the sweetness of life. What will life be without her?" And then, in glowing colors, he painted the future with Constance, and in hues that made the heart shrink back—the future without her! Walter half yielded; he began to form plans, how much he would give up; he would see Lord Beauvile again, would argue it with him once more. He would show Constance his meaning more clearly. It was a fearful crisis in Walter's life; but in the darkest hour we are not left alone, and if the tempter were on the one side, an angel, in glorious array, was on the other, strengthening, pleading, bringing back by-gone memories of innocent and happy days. The eyes of angels and saints were bent upon that lonely boy, and in the courts of heaven there went up many a prayer for him from the white-robed throng. On earth, too, in the vigil he was wont to keep, Father Mordaunt prayed in the chapel of the college at Rheims, and impelled by a sudden memory of the boy he had loved so much, he prayed especially for Walter. Walter at last fell asleep, still lying on the ground, and he dreamt strangely and confusedly. He was back at Rheims in the old chapel: there was a figure all in white; he could not see who it was; yes, it showed his mother's face, and vanished slowly away; then again, he too was clothed in white,

he was to serve Father Mordaunt's mass, but the chapel seemed to move about in a marvellous manner. The falling of some heavy weight woke him up; he awoke saying aloud, *Ne nos inducas in tentationem, sed libera nos a malo.*"

Note.—"But if such person or child so passing, or sent, shall after become comfortable and obedient to the laws of the Church, and shall repair to church and continue in such conformity, he shall, during such term as he shall so continue, be discharged of every such disability and incapacity."—*Burn's Ecclesiastical Law.*

CHAPTER VIII.

"But there are some Lutheran baits, by which the devil propagates his kingdom and inveigles many in your peep. What are they? Gold, glory, and lights, pleasures: condemn them. For what else are they than the scum of the earth, a hoarse air, a feast of the worms' specious dunghills? Despise them. Christ is full. He will feed us; He is King who will honor us; He is rich who will endow us with all felicity."—EDMUND CAMPIAN.

Very early the following morning, Walter went out. He aroused the slumbering porter and passed through the gates, and in a few minutes reached the high-road. The sun was hardly risen, and the air was keen, and refreshed him as it blew on his aching brow and fevered cheeks. His mind was in a very tumult. Every sudden passion contended fiercely within, and the long warfare of the night seemed only to rage more wildly. Spirits, good and evil, still battled round him. He took no heed of surrounding objects, and was unconscious that a rough looking peasant who had advanced towards him from the opposite quarter, had been scanning his features with the utmost interest. He started when the man spoke.

"God save your honor; may this be the way to Apswell Court?"

"It is hard by," said Walter; "but you keep early hours, my friend, and I doubt me whether you will find the porter willing to attend to you."

"Perhaps," answered the man, "your honor would condescend to tell me if there is a young nobleman called de Lisle tarrying at the court?"

"You speak with him," said Walter, hastily, forgetting in his surprise the caution of the times.

The peasant bowed, and taking a letter from his vest, presented it to Walter.

The handwriting, which was a female one, was unknown to him; he eagerly opened it and turned to the signature; it was from Amy Travers—his mother's dear and early friend. "I cannot bring myself to believe," she wrote, "that so many letters of mine addressed to you could remain unanswered if they have reached you, and I therefore despatch this by a trusty messenger, who will deliver it into the hands of none save yourself."

"We are at Morris House, not seven miles distant, and greatly do I desire to see you, for the child of my well beloved Alice, and the companion of my boys, is ever dear to my heart. We tarry here not much longer; come without delay, I beseech you."

Walter's present mood was a ripe one for indignation; to have his letters intercepted, as he now well understood they were, was an insult he could not brook. He turned to retrace his steps to Apswell Court, and perceived the messenger awaiting an answer.

"Did you divine 'twas I when you met me?" demanded he.

"Yes, my lord; and it please you, these are times when a man's eyes had need to be sharp. I am an old servant in the Travers family, and well knew I the late Baron and Baroness de Lisle—God rest their souls!—and I traced the likeness in your face, my lord, as I came near you, and I thought some good angel had sent you thus early in my way, for it would have been a hard business at the court, I reckon."

"I might as well be a prisoner, at once," said Walter, angrily, to himself; "I will let Lord Beauville see how far I can be schooled."

"Return to Lady Travers," said he aloud "and say I will

be with her anon. I thank thee, friend, for the service thou hast done me;" and Walter offered all the money he had about him for the messenger's acceptance, but it was sturdily refused, and the man set out with all speed on his journey home, while Walter returned to Apswell Court.

It created no surprise among the rooms when Walter ordered his horse and rode out, for he was frequently accustomed to do so at that hour. Walter rode quickly, and he was glad, in the rapid motion, to lose some sense of the aching thoughts that filled his mind. He was very pleased at the prospect of his visit; the name of Amy Travers had been mentioned in that one memorable conversation with his mother, and the thought of seeing old friends who knew nothing of his present struggle, and would take him away from it, as it were, comforted him; and the delay of the hour of decision delighted him, as it ever does, when we want to make our will and God's will agree together.

Warm was the greeting from Sir John Travers, while his lady clasped Walter in her arms as though he had been her own child.

"I will leave you alone," said Sir John, smiling, "for I know you have much to say;" and he quitted the room.

There was no trace of early beauty left on the pale, worn face of Lady Travers, only the sweetness or placid calm of a spirit resigned amidst privations, content amidst trials.

Neither of Walter's college companions was there. Basil was at Rome, about to receive priest's orders, and William was at the usual residence of the family.

"But we," said Lady Travers, "are frequently obliged to change our residence to escape from the spying which is carried on. Truly, our homes are no longer our own. We are impoverished, too, with the heavy fines that are laid on us. We have had to dismiss many of our servant, and William," continued she, "hath to labor hard in looking over the estates."

"What are these fines?" inquired Walter; "I feel as if I were ignorant of all that goes on now."

"Every Sunday we do not go to church, we are fined twelve marks each person; then, by another Act, every month twenty marks, and if it can be proved that we are absent twelve months, then it is two hundred pounds; and you can therefore well imagine it becomes necessary for us to move from place to place, that it may be impossible to prove this. Nay, you would hardly credit it, Walter, but some months since I fell grievously sick, and was likely to die; my husband was summoned to pay the fine, and he pleaded my sickness, but they answered I was a recusant; and according to law, all sickness among them is reckoned as rebellion against the queen's majesty."

Lady Travers pronounced her last sentence with so comical a tone, that Walter could not forbear smiling, although there was no mirth in his heart.

"Well," continued she, "we bear it with tolerable cheerfulness for the present, and I, for one, would not change with the queen on her throne; but enough of myself. My dear Walter, let me hear somewhat how you have fared since you left Castle de Lisle. Ah! you will believe me how I sorrowed for you when I heard that she was gone, the meek and holy Alice; but it was at the time of my sickness, and I could not write; indeed, I thought that I should follow her speedily, but so God willed it not. And what of Isabel, and how are you with the Beauvilles, and how do you plan for the future?"

Poor Walter! Dissimulation was very foreign to his nature. The interest and affection that Lady Travers lavished on him, touched him deeply; he longed to tell her all, and yet he could not. Had he resolved to sacrifice Constance, he could have thrown himself, as it were, on a mother's sympathy, and told her all his grief; but the fiery struggle, the habit formed in was no fit harbinger for her, who met sacrifices with smiles, who counted losses but gains. She saw he received quickly, for, indeed, Walter was confused, almost incoherent; and after a few attempts to break it down, she changed the subject, and began to talk of Basil, of Rheim, and of Father Mordaunt. No, this did not succeed. Walter inwardly writhed under it,

and could scarcely retain his composure. Lady Travers felt perplexed and alarmed, and breathed a secret, wordless prayer, that the child of her loved friend might not depart from them unconsolated.

The door opened at this moment, and her husband entered, accompanied by another gentleman, whose dress was dirty and travel-stained. His riding-hat he removed as he entered, and thus displayed a head and face that, once seen, could never be forgotten; the face was oval, but the forehead broad and open, and the auburn hair cut short showed the temples; the chin was pointed, and the short moustache and beard were of the same color as the hair; the nose aquiline; and the general expression of the face one of extreme calmness; and while the eagle-glance of the deep-set eyes told of the fire of genius and the ardent soul within, the lines traced on the face spoke of many an inward conflict, of hard study, of wearing thought, and of mastery over self. As Lady Travers's eyes fell on him, she uttered almost a cry of delight, and going forward, knelt for a moment to receive a blessing. Walter, who drew back into the shade, yet could not take his eyes from the stranger's face; and now that he smiled as he warmly greeted Lady Travers, there was something inexpressibly winning in the countenance which the smile lighted up so radiantly. At the same moment, while conversing with Sir John and his lady, and answering some eager inquiries of the latter, his eye perceived and scanned Walter with a searching glance. At last Lady Travers turned round and exclaimed—

"Come forward, Walter; here is a pleasure for you we did not indeed foresee. Father, this is Walter, Baron de Lisle; and, Walter, you see before you Father Campian."

Walter felt overpowered at the knowledge that he was in the presence of that renowned man, whose name was known throughout Europe, and who had been looked upon by the students of Rheims as a hero. Yes, he really saw before him the "Flower of Oxford" and the "Gem of Christendom" (titles which were both given to Father Campian); he saw before him the man who, having gained all the honors of the university, and taken deacon's orders in the Established Church, had cast away all worldly advantages, crowds of friends, prospects of advancement, that he might enter within the proscribed and persecuted Church of Christ; the man of brilliant genius and profound learning, who had quitted the college of Douay to learn humility and abnegation in the noviciate of the Jesuits. Made a priest, he was sent to the mission in Bohemia, and from thence, but a few months back, to England, to a prospect of speedy martyrdom in his native land,—for his power of winning the souls of others was unbounded. Already England was ringing with the sound of his "Challenge to the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge;" and the "Pope's Champion," as he was named by both friend and foe, was not likely long to escape the vengeance of Elizabeth.

But while we have been describing him, Campian had passed his arm affectionately within that of Walter.

"I am so truly glad to see you," he said. "On my way back to England I tarried a while at Rheims, and Father Mordaunt spoke of you, and commended you to my good offices, should I meet with you. Indeed," said Campian, turning to Sir John, "I think, if it had not been for my visit to Rheims, I should not have come hither."

"Why, father," answered Sir John Travers, with a smile, "I should not have thought you needed much persuasion."

"Yes," replied the priest; "I was loth to leave Bohemia, where so many are lost in the snares of heresy, but good Father Mordaunt had an answer to every argument I could bring forward."

"What said he?"

"Father," he said, "whatever you did there may be done by others, one or more, of your order. Secondly, you owe more duty to England than to Bohemia, and to London than to Prague; though I am glad you have made some recompense to that country for the old wound it received from us in Wickliff's time, from whom the Hussites of Bohemia learnt their

heresies. Thirdly, the recovery of one soul from heresy is worth all your pains, as I hope you will gain many; because the harvest is both more plentiful and ripe with us than in those parts. Finally, the reward may be greater; for you may be martyred for it at home, which you cannot easily obtain there!" At these last words, Walter almost shuddered.

"So you may suppose I was satisfied," continued Father Campian, without appearing to notice the emotion.

"Father," exclaimed Lady Travers, "you must want some refreshment and rest; and you too Walter. You can stay with us this night, can you not?" said she, addressing the latter.

"Oh no," replied Walter, starting; "I must, indeed, be home ere nightfall."

"Well," rejoined Campian, "that is some way off yet, and so if you, my Lady Travers, like a good housewife, will prepare our repast, De Lisle and I will confer together for a short space."

"I have also matters to attend to," said Sir John; and followed by his wife, he quitted the apartment. Walter and the priest were alone.

"I am truly glad," said Campian, "this chance, if chance we may call it, hath brought us together, my son. I have heard of you, and you have not been absent from my thoughts nor my poor prayers; but I knew not how to gain access to you. Your position must be a most difficult one. What proposes Lord Beauville for your future?"

Walter stammered something about nothing being yet decided; Lord Beauville was very kind and good. The enemy was hard at work. Never did Walter feel so desirous to be within Apswell Court as at that moment, never did Lord Beauville's proposals look so tempting. There was a short silence. Campian looked keenly at him.

"These are no times for trifling," said he, at length; "our lives are in our hands, and none of us know, from moment to moment, when the Master will call us. My son, all is not right with you; there is a burden on your soul, and you need counsel and help. Wilt thou not seek it, now that God offers it to you through His unworthy servant?"

There was no answer.

"Think you," continued Campian, "that we know not the greatness of the trials that encompass you? Think you that you hear the words of one who has not suffered, who has not known what it is to follow the cross, through forsaking of friends and crucifying of his own desires? I glory not in it; but, my son, in these days, we were unfit to speak to any of you, if we had not ourselves the marks of the cross upon us."

He laid his arm on Walter's shoulder as he spoke, and drew him towards him with a gesture of such deep tenderness that the heart striving to keep aloof was conquered.

A groan burst from Walter's lips; he threw himself at the feet of Father Campian, and poured forth the whole tale of his temptation and his suffering. With deepest interest and tender sympathy the priest listened.

"What must I do, father?" said Walter; the struggle is too great; I am tried beyond my strength."

"Not beyond, my son, but to the utmost. God has in store some great thing for you, whom He has thus early called to a mental martyrdom. There is but one remedy for you now, and it is *flight*. Apswell Court is even, as Lord Beauville said, no fit place for you; and the earl, by the hypocrisy he hath practised, has lost all right to exercise any power over your movements. I would counsel you to return to Rheims, and consult with Father Mordaunt as to your future course; I would this very night proceed onward to the coast. One of the small merchant vessels which are plying about, will, for a small sum, take you over to France."

"I will," said Walter; "it is a wise and safe counsel that you give me, father, and I will follow it. I will write from France to Lord Beauville and to Isabel."

But a sudden memory came over him, and for the moment overpowered him. He saw float before him a radiant face, with

* Challenger.

golden tresses falling on the fair neck ; he heard the low tone of sweetness in which she confessed her love ; he felt once more the touch of the arm that had twined round his but yesternight ; his Constance, his beautiful one, and his own !

Walter was all unmanned.

Campian looked at him with tenderness ; he put his hand into his vest ; and drew forth a small and finely-carved ivory crucifix ; he held it before Walter's eyes.

"Behold the Captain in whose army thou hast enlisted, my son,—the Chief whom we must follow. He bids us not to attempt an enterprise which He has not undertaken first ; yea, and conquered. Oh, be strong, and be of good courage ! The Crucified is the King of Glory : nail thyself bravely to thy cross ; so shalt thou be crowned hereafter."

Walter was weeping now ; those tears that are shed but seldom, and leave their furrows on the cheek for aye.

Campian pressed a secret spring at the back of the crucifix ; it flew open, and displayed a small image of the dead body of the Saviour, wrapped as if for the tomb.

"'Twas a fancy of mine own," he said, as he showed it to Walter ; "I would not be without a crucifix to console my brethren with, but for mine own the sight of this ever moves me to the strongest emotions. Yes," he continued, gazing at it, as if forgetting any one but himself heard him—"there is something heroic in suffering even on the cross ; but *death*, who shall tell its unutterable humiliation to Him, whose Divine breath is the life of man ; to leave His sacred limbs to the rude hands of the soldiery ; His heart to be rent asunder by them ? This is what upholds me when I am like to faint under the burden of temptation, when alluring hopes and fair ambitions would draw me away from His service. I go to kneel, not by His cross, but by His grave, and bury myself and my proud heart beneath the folds of those linen garments."

Walter's eyes were fixed on Campian with wonder and reverence. He saw the pale, wan face glowing, the deep-set eyes radiant with light and love, as he gazed on the image of his Master's sufferings.

"Father," said Walter, suddenly, "I, too, will love Him best ; I, too, will lay at His feet every hope and vision. I will die with Him ; will lie down in the tomb with Him, and forsake all. Hear me, father ; in your presence I vow it ;" and Walter pressed with his lips the image of Christ which Campian held.

Silently the priest blessed him, and received the vow.

"I would hesitate at other times, and in other cases," added he, "to witness such solemn words spoken in haste, but with you there is but one choice, and that to be made instantly—it is for life or death."

"I have chosen now," said Walter, resolutely ; "God helping me, I will not falter. I will go and arrange with Sir John how I shall gain the coast, and with what speed I best may."

And the moon rose in her glory that night, and silvered with her beams the ocean that calmly rippled by, as Walter de Lisle stood on the cliff of the coast of Kent, bidding a long farewell to his country.

But yestereven that same moon looked down on Apswell Terrace, as the lovers plighted their passionate vows, and life in all its sunshine lay before the young baron : now all was passed, and already the boat touched the beach that was to convey him for ever from its brightness ; and at that last moment the brave heart flinched not. In one day Walter had lived years. Last night he was the boy, full of light-heartedness and sanguine hopes ; this night he was a man, entering his manhood by the gate of suffering and of endurance. He has made the sacrifice, has dashed aside the temptation. Shall he endure unto the end ?

Note.—"Every person above the age of sixteen years, who shall not repair to some church, chapel, or usual place of common prayer, but forbear the same, shall forfeit to the queen's majesty, for every month which he shall so forbear, £20; and over and besides the said forfeitures, every person so forbearing, by the space of twelve months, shall, after certificate thereof in writing made into the king's bench by the bishop of the diocese, or a justice of assize, or a justice of the peace of the county where the offender shall dwell, be bound with two sureties,

in £200 at least, to the good behavior, and so to continue bound until he conform himself and come to church ; which said forfeitures shall be one-third to the queen, for the relief of the poor in the parish where the offence shall be committed, to be delivered by warrant to the principal officers in the receipt of the exchequer, without further warrant, and one-third to him who shall sue. And if such person shall not be able, or shall fail to pay the same within three months after judgment given, he shall be committed to prison till he have paid the same, or conform himself to go to church.

"A person who was sick for part of the time contained in an information upon this statute shall not be at all excused by reason of such a sickness, if it be proved that he was a recusant both before and after ; for it shall be intended that he obstinately forbore during that time."—*Burn's Ecclesiastical Law.*

CHAPTER IX.

"The bridegroom's doors are open'd wide,
And I am next of kin ;
The guests are met, the feast is set,—
Mayst hear the merry din."

COLERIDGE.

Apswell Court is thronged with guests, and re-echoes again to the sounds of revelry. No expense or pomp is spared. Palfreys in gay trappings fill the courtyard, numberless servants are in all directions, while the tables groan beneath the weight of good cheer. Whence all this rejoicing and merriment in a house erewhile painted as so dull ? It is in honor of the marriage of the only daughter of the house of Beauville with the Duke of Bertram ; you can see the duke even now as he stands on the terrace in conversation with some of the guests. He is a man of middle age, and of goodly bearing and appearance. Kindliness is written on his open Saxon face, which, though somewhat heavy, is now lighted up with smiles in answer to the congratulations which meet him on all sides. He may well be congratulated, for fortune has suddenly showered down on him all her gifts. As simple William Bertram, captain in Her Majesty's Life Guards, he looked to no other way to distinction than through his sword. The sudden death of his cousin, the young Duke of Bertram, when on the very eve of marriage, placed him at once among the peers of Britain, with a far richer estate than many of them. Since then the sun of prosperity did not cease to shine. He grew in the queen's favor, and many a noble house would have gladly sought his alliance ; but the duke wished to marry to please himself, and let the years slip away before he had made his choice. But Christmas 15— he had accepted the invitation of the Earl of Beauville to join the gambols at Apswell Court, and for the first time beheld Lady Constance. He asked for her hand, and was accepted. The duke was by no means an ardent lover, and did not look for deep affection from his wife,—indeed, he liked full well the retiringness of the Lady Constance, and the quiet manner in which she received his protestations of admiration ; while in company her gay laugh and light-hearted manner prevented any fears that might have arisen as to her willingness to be his bride.

And Lady Constance—is it possible the dream of last autumn can have so passed away, that we find her in early spring a happy and loving bride. Let us look in upon her in her retiring bower, while they bedeck her for her bridal.

Very beautiful does she look in her mantle of cloth of silver and her stomacher of pearls, her garniture, likewise of pearls and diamonds ; a collar of brilliants clasps her slender throat, and jewels gleam on her arms, while diamonds confine the rich veil of lace that half conceals her sunny hair. How beautiful she is ! and how many envy her as they gaze ! Her eyes are bright and her cheeks glow, and a ready smile is on her lips ; and, truly, Constance was *not* an unwilling bride. She had loved Walter de Lisle with all the intenseness of her nature, and the parting from him had been agony ; but with it there was none of the hope deferred, none of the shivering of trust that so often breaks a woman's heart. Walter had sacrificed her only to his God ; even in her anguish she could honor him, could feel he was but the more worthy of her love. Then she knew he was gone without recall ; she believed in the steadfastness of Walter's righteous resolves ; she believed she should never see his face again. The world grew heavy to her,

and her heart turned sick, her cheek grew pale, and her pillow was wet with bitter tears; but woman's pride came to her assistance, and resolutely she struggled with her grief. The world should not say, Constance Beauville was dying of unrequited love; so amidst the Christmas gambols, Constance bore her part, and the Duke of Bertram could not guess that her cheek was paler than its wont, or that there was a hollow tone in her laughter.

The earl was very anxious that Constance should wed the duke, and he found no opposition from his daughter, who was well accustomed to bend to his will. She was glad of a prospect of a change, and far from insensible to the advantage the alliance presented; to be one of the first duchesses in the land, with riches and luxuries at command, to be courted on all sides,—why, these were the very things that must now be the objects of Constance's life; human love has crumbled away, and religion she does not think of, for in her own she has no faith, and that which she knows to be true she dare not profess. No wonder she wears a bright aspect as she walks to her nuptials.

The attendants of all the ladies staying at Apswell Court had assembled in conclave to admire the bride's dress, and they were quite unable to divine for what cause the serving-maiden of the Lady Constance wept so bitterly.

Was she, then, to lose her service by her mistress's marriage? No, indeed, she was raised to the dignity of first serving-maiden to a duchess: thereby her glory would be so much increased that many a knight's daughter might envy her; and her mistress was no sad damsel, forced to marry the man she hated, as was recorded in many a ballad and tale. She was as bright as the morning; what *did* Rose weep for? They gained no answer; nevertheless Rose's tears fell fast, as she bore her lady's train to the bridal.

Near the entrance to the chapel Constance met her father.

"All shines on us this day, my Constance," said he, gladly; "Regnier is returned in time to be present at your wedding."

Constance's face glowed with delight, as she received her brother's greeting, and together they passed into the chapel.

Viscount Regnier, the only son of the earl, was some eight or nine years older than his sister. He had been absent from home for more than a twelvemonth, holding a post of honor in a foreign embassy. Young as he was, he had already distinguished himself, and was a favorite of the queen's. There was a good deal of likeness between brother and sister. Regnier possessed the same chiselled features, the full dark eye, without the melting softness of Constance's; the short dark beard and moustache lent sternness to his face, and his look seemed to pierce you through, while determination was written on the brow and the compressed lips. There was something that attracted and yet repelled you at once in the viscount's face; but it is now all smiles, as he hastens to greet the various guests to whom his father presents him. His eye, accustomed to take in much at a glance, wonders who is that regal-looking damsel, to whom his father scarcely names him, and who returns his courtesy with so stately a gesture. Her robe of purple brocaded silk becomes her well, and the dazzling white of her throat and arms needs no jewels to set them off; not an ornament is to be seen, not even an edging on the border of her lace coif, under which is braided her luxuriant black hair. How she stands alone, amidst his father's guests, and how she seems to disdain their indifference! He marks all through the day, at what a distance she could keep the oldest and most privileged of the visitors. Regnier had seen many beautiful women, but never one to his fancy equalled the queenly Isabel, and the haughtiness with which she wore her charms added to them in his eyes.

"My lord," said Viscount Regnier to the earl, as they found themselves alone that evening on the terrace, the guests, weary of pleasure, being dispersed for a while, "you have oftentimes wished me to marry, and I would not comply. I have made my choice now, however, and I trust me you will dislike it not."

"Who is she?" exclaimed his father eagerly. "Yes, Ralph,

it rejoices me, indeed, that you should marry, is it then possible—Juliet Dacre?"

"Juliet Dacre!" answered Regnier, scornfully; none of your lapdogs for me. No, it is yonder Mistress de Lisle, your fair ward. By my troth, and her face is bewitching."

The earl looked at his son as if fearing he was distraught. He was silent from astonishment.

"You congratulate me not, my lord."

"Ralph, I thought you wiser; but, be assured that is a game you cannot play at; Isabel is a steadfast Catholic, and would not wed the king of England to forswear her faith. Ah, smile as you like, I know what is on your tongue—a woman will sacrifice much for her love, and you may win Isabel's; but I know the de Lisle spirit better than you; I have *proved* it by—"

Lord Beauville stopped short; his eagerness had hurried him into an admission he would not have made; for, now that the affair was so well over, he had not intended to make his son a confidant in the history of his ill-fated attempt to unite the houses of de Lisle and Beauville. Now, however, Regnier insisted on hearing the whole. At the close of the tale his fury burst forth.

"And he dared—this beardless boy, to win my sister's love, and then cast it from him as a worthless thing! He, a beggar and a recusant, dared to offer such an insult to the house of Beauville, at the beck of those accursed priests, craven that he is! 'Tis well for him—'tis well he is beyond seas; let him but cross my path, and see what vengeance I will take."

"And yet you would wed the sister of this youth!" said the earl.

"Yes," said his son, turning round upon him, "I will wed her. Before I heard this tale I would have done it for her beauty and stately bearing; now I will do it for revenge. The de Lisles *shall* stoop to the Beauvilles."

"Did I," said the earl, calmly, "entertain the slightest idea of your success with Isabel, I would be displeased at your words; but I know well, that sooner would you turn the current from its course, than bend that steadfast will. If I failed with Walter, a boy of wild impulse and not over much piety, shall you succeed with a woman cold as very stone, whose soul is wrapped in her prayers and musing, whose one ambition is to see papistry restored in this land?"

"I am not saying," answered his son, "that 'tis an easy enterprise, for thereby I should dishonor my own skill; but it is seldom, *very* seldom, I fail, when I set in earnest about anything; and come weal, come woe, though man and angel should forbid me, I am resolved to win and to wear Isabel de Lisle."

Lord Beauville shook his head; but further speech was interrupted by the gathering of company in the grounds, and by tacit consent the subject was hereafter dropped between them.

CHAPTER X.

"One single flash of glad surprise
Just glanced from Isabel's dark eyes;
But vanish'd in the blush of shame
That, as its penance, instant came.
Oh, thought unworthy of my race!"

LORD OF THE ISLES.

THE train of the Duke and Duchess of Bertram had departed, and the numerous array of guests had dispersed, and Apswell Court grew comparatively quiet,—comparatively only, for the silence and gloom that once hung over it seemed to have vanished. The earl was frequently absent, but Viscount Regnier pleaded that his long detention on foreign service gave him a right to be exempted from duty for a while, and that he should spend some time as he listed. So the castle grew gay under his government, and hawking and shooting, with many a mock tournament and trial of arms, went on. There were few ladies to witness the sports, for, now Constance was gone, few cared to travel any distance to visit the stiff and formal Lady Anne, who for her part was only too well pleased to be left in peace with her tapestry and her flowers.

How Viscount Regnier first persuaded Isabel to emerge from her retirement, she herself could hardly have told. She was won by his manner into friendliness, almost without her own will. The way in which he treated her was so different to any she was accustomed to meet with—the respectful distance, the distinguishing her from the rest of his father's guests, as though by right claiming greater attention; then, in a solitary walk, Isabel could not avoid overhearing a few sentences of admiration of her fall from Regnier's lips,—not the praise of her beauty, which Isabel was accustomed to, and disdained, but of that very haughtiness and cold reserve on which Isabel prided herself, but all the while had an uncomfortable feeling that Mary Thoresby and Walter might have been in the right in condemning. His delicate way of implying how strongly he condemned his father's treatment of her, was refreshing to Isabel. A request that she would assist him in tracing the various branches of the house of De Lisle was made and granted, and the employment naturally threw her almost daily in contact with him: and the days he did not come, and she did not see him, soon became heavy days to Isabel. Her spirits were oppressed, her heart felt a void. Isabel never paused to inquire its cause; alas! she had lost the habit of questioning; and schooling her own heart, and she was unwilling to resume the task.

When Lord Regnier went for a few days at a time to London, Apawell Court seemed to grow intolerably dull, and Isabel's heart rebounded when she heard the clatter in the courtyard which announced his return; and each return grew more pleasant, each bringing some new proof of the honor and respect in which she was held; something to give her pleasure was sure to arrive, some new book was laid upon her table, choice flowers were transplanted, that she might admire them. A palfrey was carefully trained for her use, and Isabel could not refuse to ride her, when she found that part of Lord Regnier's mornings were regularly spent in riding the animal, that he might be sure she was suitable for a lady; and when the choicest falcon was taught to fly from her wrist—Lord Regnier saying, as he pre-ented it, "Rare bird needs rare mistress,"—could she refuse to join the hawking parties? And if she did stand back at first from acceptance of all these gifts, how humbly and mournfully the viscount would say, he deserved it,—he had offered them with all respect, as the rightful due of a deeply injured lady; but if she disdained them, there was no complaint that could be made.

So Isabel went on, and in the incense to her pride which she daily accepted, what wonder that her head grew dizzy and her eyes were blinded? And thus time passed, and another summer came.

Last summer, and coldly standing aloof to chide, Isabel had watched her brother at the feet of Constance! She had forgotten it now; she forgot to long for news from Walter, for her soul was absorbed in one wild passion.

One morning Isabel sat in the shade of the thick trees: the heavy fragrance of flowers, and the soft, lazy hum of a sultry summer day were wafted towards her—a step sounded on the greensward—that step which had gained the power to make Isabel's heart beat: the viscount stood by her side, but a different expression was on his face,—one of pain and disturbance.

"What has happened, my lord?" exclaimed she, hurriedly.

"A letter from my father," answered he, "bidding me to come speedily, since it is her majesty's pleasure that I again depart on foreign service."

It seemed to Isabel as if all her pulses stood still; she could make no answer, and though her lips unclosed, no sound came forth,—Regnier was kneeling by her.

"Isabel, you will not let me go alone! you have seen long since that I am a captive at your will,—I cannot live without you, Isabel!"

What boots it to dwell on those burning words, or how Isabel's mute answer confessed her love? She slept that night the betrothed of Viscount Regnier.

The earl came home in a few days, and preparations were

made for the viscount's departure. Isabel expressed a wish that there should be little festivity at her marriage, and the request was acceded to, and it was arranged that the rejoicing should only take place amongst the household. Though aware that there must be a Protestant public ceremony, Isabel was determined on having her marriage privately performed by a priest, and she expressed her intention to Lord Regnier, but it was overruled; it would be impossible to do it without observation, he said, and, just at this moment, would bring down disgrace on his head. He could not do it; it would endanger the priest's life as well. It was useless to insist on it, he continued,—it could not be done; and if that were the condition of their marriage, he must relinquish it, and go alone to a foreign shore,—alone to death, for he should never return. Isabel yielded, and stifled the conscience that tried to make itself heard.

Bright was the sunshine that gleamed through the painted window and fell on the pavement of the chapel, as a bridal train was once more gathered there. The bride to-day looked pale—as white almost as her dress; still, calmly she plighted her vows, and, for a life of weal or woe, is bound to Lord Regnier.

Isabel turned to receive the greeting of her father-in-law, but instead of embracing her, Lord Beauville suddenly stumbled forward, and fell on the ground, while blood gushed from his mouth and nostrils! They raised him up, and carried him from the chapel, followed by Isabel, clinging in terror to her husband's arm. At the chapel door were gathered some of the peasants on the estates.

"Blood on a bridal!" whispered one of them to her neighbor; "that bodes no good—see ye, see ye!"

Isabel heard; she looked down, and truly the spotless robe she had chosen for her wedding was sprinkled and spotted with the earl's blood! A shudder ran through her, unbidden, unshriven, she had approached a holy sacrament—approached, perchance, to profane it. No time for musings now! They have reached the earl's chamber, and the physician is vainly endeavoring to stanch the blood, that, from the breaking of some internal vessel, was gushing forth. The man, an hour ago full of strength and energy, lay on his couch dying and unconscious. He opened his eyes at length, one wild stare around—then fixed them on the roof of the room. He struggled for speech, but the crimson tide flowing fast, forbade utterance. A few incoherent words were all the bystanders heard—

"Have mercy, Alice; I did it not—'twas her own choice. They were free—only one day—one hour! Dost hear, Alice?"

They were his last words, and with a groan of anguish, Lord Beauville died.

Isabel had heard all, standing petrified by; the child of Alice de Lisle, one who had watched her deathbed, had no word of consolation—no prayer for this; she could not bid him, even in that last moment, call upon his God for mercy. Her husband drew her away, and busy hands undid those blood-stained bridal garments, and laid her down to rest. But her brow throbbed, and her heart was sick with terror. There was no peace for her till her husband, after having seen the necessary offices towards his father discharged, came to her and clasped her fondly in his arms. She had not wondered to see him so composed and resolute through the sudden horror; but she expected to hear him now pour forth passionate regrets for the loss of a father who had never crossed him, but entertained for him the strongest affection. His first words were—

"And you, my fairest one, are countless already;" and he spoke gaily. "No foreign banishment for us now; you shall see your husband sitting in the queen's councils."

Isabel shuddered in his embrace. It was true, however. Strange chances of life! the house she once called her prison was her own—Isabel de Lisle was now Countess of Beauville.

PART THE SECOND.

CHAPTER I.

"Alive a queen, now dead I am a saint;
Once Mary called, my name now Martyr is;
From earthly reign debarred by restraint,
In lieu whereof I reign in heavenly bliss.
Rue not my death, rejoice at my repose;
It was no death to me, but to my woe;
The bud was open'd to let out the rose,
The chains unloosed to let the captive go."
POEMS BY FATHER SOUTHWELL.

FROM the broad Roman road which led from London to Chelmsford, a narrow lane turned off, and passed directly into the avenue of Thoresby Hall. The house was a large building, in the then modern style, such as we are wont to call Elizabethan. It formed three sides of a quadrangle, which enclosed a spacious courtyard. On one side of the hall were grassy slopes and beds of flowers and bushes, and these slopes ran down to a small piece of water, on the opposite side of which ran a grove of lime trees whose branches interlaced each other.

The window of one of the principal rooms in the hall was wide open, and near it sat a lady at work. Ever and anon she turned to speak to another lady, also sitting near the window, but in a different attitude. The chair in which this latter was placed was of curious construction, and well lined with cushions, and the fragile form that reclined in it was that of a cripple. The thin fingers, unnaturally long, hung down by her side, and the pale face and sunken eyes told of long and constant suffering. She spoke gently in answer to the anxious looks of her companions. "I am very comfortable, darling sister; do be at ease concerning me for a while."

Is it possible then that this is our old friend Mary Thoresby, and the sufferer Blanché, of whom we remember her speaking at Castle de Lisle.

The bright-looking Mary has changed considerably—she has passed into a calm, thoughtful woman, somewhat older than her years. We can trace that she has endured much—indeed she has had cause. Her mother has been dead for years, after a long illness, and the charge of the household has devolved on her, with the constant attendance on her sick sister.

Blanche had been just on the eve of quitting her father's house, to follow her earnest desire of entering religion. The day before, a priest having happened to arrive at the house, it was arranged a Mass should be said by him. At this Mass Blanche was more than usually anxious to assist, it being her last opportunity ere leaving the home of her childhood forever.

The Mass was said in a small chamber near the roof of the house, from whence an easy way of escape might be found, in case of an alarm. This room, or loft, was reached by two ladders, which led into different parts of the house. The Mass was just over, when an alarm was given, and a party of men, in search of the priest, rushed into the house. The priest and the other gentlemen instantly sought the roof, and Blanche felt that could she only remove the vessels and vestments which in the haste, were left on the temporary altar, the pursuers would be off their scent. She gathered them all up, and as the feet of the men were ascending one ladder, she left the room by the other. In her haste she missed her footing, and fell from an immense height. She was picked up by the terrified servants insensible, and, as they thought, dead, but still clasping close to her breast her sacred charge. Lady Thoresby was at the time ill, and Mary attending on her, which had been the reason why Blanche had been the only woman present at the Mass. The alarm hastened Lady

Thoresby's death, and Mary went from her mother's death bed to what she supposed to be that of Blanche; but Blanche did not die. Her fall had rendered her an incurable cripple, and a life of continual suffering was her portion.

Not only was Mary compelled to witness the severe daily suffering of her sister, but a deeper shade had been thrown over her life, by the necessary postponement of her marriage with the Viscount Clinton, a young Catholic nobleman, to whom she had been just betrothed. During the last few months Blanche's general health had decidedly improved, and Lord Clinton had been earnestly pressing that their marriage should take place, and that Mary should not leave her home, but still remain the nurse and comforter of her helpless sister. To this Mary had consented; and the marriage would take place soon after the arrival of a priest who was expected at the hall.

—"Mary," said Blanche, softly, "while I slept this morning, saw you Clinton?"

"Yes, dear," answered Mary, blushing; "we were together in the lime-grove."

"That is a favorite spot of yours," said Blanche, smiling. "And did he tell you any news?"

"We were speaking of the old subject," answered Mary,—"the sorrows around. This act of the queen hath affrighted us all. To lay violent hands on an anointed sovereign and sister-queen betokens such virulence against our religion, we know not what will come next."

"Poor Mary Stuart!" answered Blanche; "'tis well for thee, at all events; the prison-bars are broken down, and the bird set free. But it must have been sad to die without the sacraments: that was such a frightful cruelty on Elizabeth's part."

"Ah," said Mary, "Clinton hath heard the particulars of her last hours; most touching and wonderful they are."

"When she found that her almoner, Le Preau, was to be kept from her (although he was in the castle), she wrote to him, begging him to keep vigil that night with her and for her, desiring to make her general confession to him thus, being prevented from doing it otherwise—declaring that she died innocent, and requesting absolution."

"But a joy beyond price was in store for her. Some time ago, the holy Father, seeing the malice of her enemies, and to what length they were tending, sent her the Blessed Sacrament. It was enclosed in a gold ciborium; richly jewelled, and with it he sent his permission that, if in the hour of death she were deprived of the assistance of a priest, she might communicate herself."

"Oh, how marvellous a privilege!" exclaimed Blanche; "beyond what has been granted even to the saints. I suppose a woman's hands have not ever touched the Blessed Sacrament since the blessed Clare defied the heathens. Go on, tell me all about it."

"So, on the morning of February the 8th, arising from her rest, during which she had continued to pray, she entered alone into her oratory. No one went with her, her loving servants were without. No eye save the adoring angels, no ear save the listening saints saw her awful act,* or heard her whispered prayer."

"Oh," said Blanche, "what must have been her feelings in that hour! Did not her thoughts wander back to her own *Belle France*, to the solemn hour when, perchance, in the royal chapel, and clothed in silvery robes, the child-queen made her first communion? Ah! Mary, how fair looked the world to her then, how proudly waved the banners of two broad kingdoms at her side, how lightly sat the crown on that brow of angel beauty, how gaily beat the heart in those days of guileless youth! What thought could have shadowed then her last communion?"

"Yes," returned Mary, "a heart-broken prisoner,—a woman aged in her prime,—a desolate widow, a forsaken mother, a betrayed queen. Gone were riches, crowns and friends; passed away the pomp of regal France, and the once fervent loyalty of false Scotland."

* See Lives of the Queens of Scotland."

"But," said Blanche, looking out to the clear sky, "how blessed to think on—there was left, the same faith, the same God. Even when His priests were kept from her, He came Himself to absolve the sins of that sore tree—heard the fainting soul with angels' bread. What wonder, then, if in the strength of that food, she went forth to die with a martyr's fortitude! What wonder, then, that neither the insults of the Earl of Kent upon her dignity, nor those of the Dean of Peterborough upon her religion, moved her! Her spirit was in the hall of Caiaphas and upon the hill of Calvary. What wonder, then, that she forgot not for one instant the tenderness of the woman, the courage of the sovereign, or the endurance of the saint! So died she; so went she to her crown. Mary Stuart, queen and martyr, pray for us!"*

Blanche lay back, exhausted by her sudden burst of feeling. Mary was in tears, and there was a short silence.

"I hear my father's step outside," said Mary. "Are you well enough to see him, dearest?"

"Oh yes!" said Blanche, opening her eyes.

Mary went to the door and admitted her father.

After gently kissing his suffering child, Sir Robert said—

"We have had news that a priest is to land on this coast immediately, and we have been in great tribulation, not knowing how to get anyone to meet him."

"Could not Henry have gone?" said Blanche.

"Upon what horse, my child?" replied her father; "thou forgettest the state of a recusant's stables. Henry went forth instantly to try and borrow a horse of Arthur Leslie, but Arthur declares it is far safer if he go himself; he has friends along the coast, and, being well known as a Protestant, there will be no danger of question."

"A singular sort of Protestant is Arthur," remarked Mary. "It is very noble of him to undertake such an office."

"Ay," said Sir Robert; "and we must hope and pray his charity may be rewarded by the gift of faith."

"How is it," said Blanche, "that he stays out of the Church?"

"Simply because," said Sir Robert, "he cannot relinquish the hopes of life at one glance. He is his uncle's heir to one of the finest properties in the country, with every prospect of advancement. He knows well that to become a Catholic is to become poor, and despised, and persecuted—Well, I must not tarry, to fatigue Blanche; I only came to tell you that perhaps to-morrow we may have a priest with us once more; and now, farewell, for here comes Henry to fetch me."

It was a beautiful sight to see the fine old gray-haired baronet leaning on his son's arm, a young man full of the strength of early manhood. Both one and the other maintained well the reputation of the Thoresby family, as producing the finest men in England, and their faces bore evidence, too, of the character of that same family—generous and noble-hearted, and brave and loyal, and kind to the poor; and yet these were the men who, in the glorious reign of good Queen Bess, held their lands, their homes, oftentimes their lives, in fear.

Note.—"No papist, or reputed papist, so refusing or making default in making and subscribing the declaration as by the last-mentioned Act, shall have or keep in his possession any horse above the value of five pounds; and two justices by their warrant may authorize any person, with the assistance of a constable or his deputy, to search for and seize the same for the use of the king. But if any person shall conceal or be aiding in concealing any such horse, he shall be committed to prison by such warrant and Act for three months, and shall also forfeit treble the value of such horse."

CHAPTER II.

"They who call me to the work can shield me,
Or make me strong to suffer."—ION.

"You seem to be watching that ship very narrowly," said a young and fine-looking gentleman on horseback to two

"—Madam," interrupted the Earl of Kent, "your life would be the death of our religion, and your death will be its preservation." "Ah," exclaimed Mary, "I did not flatter myself with the thought I was worthy of such a death, and I humbly receive it as an earnest of my acceptance into the number of God's chosen servants."—*Lives of the Queens of Scotland.*

weather-beaten fisherman, who were mending their nets on the flat coast of Essex.

"Marry, and well we may, sir," answered one of them; "for she is actually putting off a boat."

"And you think it will not live in this sea?"

The sailor pointed for answer to the boiling surf that dashed upon the sand, and the distant foam of the billows. "Why, sir, the vessel herself is obliged to put to sea again, 'tis so dangerous on the coast; and some fools, I suppose, who want to land, choose to drown themselves. Why not go to London, I marvel?"

But Arthur Leslie did not wonder, and felt convinced that the adventurer in the boat was no other than the man he was in quest of; so he gazed with absorbed interest on the struggle. The little boat was tossed up and down, as if the proud waves toyed with its destruction. Now it was lost to view, and seemed engulfed for ever, then it rose again triumphantly upon the white crest of a billow.

"She nears the shore, by heaven!" cried one of the men.

"There must be some witchery about it," muttered the other; "for no mortal power could bring that boat to land."

"Could we not give help, now it is so near?" said Arthur, turning to the men.

"No, no," answered the last speaker; "I'll have naught to do with witchcraft; I'll not help them to land."

"Shame on you, then!" returned Arthur; "will you not?" addressing the other.

He was too intently watching the scene to answer; but suddenly rousing—

"By my halidome, but they are brave men!" he exclaimed. "I'll down to the shore to see what I can do;" and he dashed down, followed by Arthur. The raging spray flew in their faces, and almost blinded them. The boat neared—it was amongst the breakers!

"There she goes!" said the sailor, as, amid the roar of the waves, the cracking sound was audible. "Now they must struggle for their lives!" and accordingly, getting free from the fragments of the boat, the two men who had been in her, breasted the waves bravely. No human help could avail!—the mighty waves tossed them back again and again, till at length one more kindly threw them, panting and exhausted, on the sand. Arthur and the sailor ran to them, and, lifting them from the ground, drew them into a place of safety. Arthur was quite certain his conjecture was correct, and the form he held in his arms was that of a priest. Presently the man revived a little, and his first act was to look up to heaven, and his first words were—"Thanks be to God!" Then, suddenly making an effort to rise, he exclaimed: "My poor companion, I trust me he hath not suffered."

"Be at ease, sir," answered Arthur; "he is nearly well, and less injured than you. He is, I trow, more accustomed to such feats than yourself."

"I have not, indeed, tried swimming for some years, and I did fee, as if I could struggle no longer, when suddenly the friendly waves dashed me on the beach. Thanks, good sir, for your courtesy; I can now rise."

"You must change your drenched clothing," returned Arthur; "there is a fisherman's hut hard by, and afterwards I trust you will let me conduct you on your journey, for I know this road well."

The stranger seemed embarrassed at the kind offer, and Arthur, desirous to put an end to the mystery, said—

"Perhaps it is you, sir, whom I am bid to seek. My good friend Sir Robert Thoresby, is expecting a friend from foreign parts."

There was the start he looked for.

"Sir Robert Thoresby, of Thoresby, in this county?"

"The same."

"Then," said the stranger; "I think I am the one you are looking for."

"I was sure of it," said Arthur, smiling, "when I saw that adventurous boat set forth. I have another horse waiting at a distance, will it please you to mount?"

"As soon as I have given the sailor who accompanied me the reward I promised him—for happily my purse has come safe to land also—then I am at your service."

With much eagerness did Sir Robert and Henry watch the approach of two horsemen who were riding up the avenue at sunset that evening. The foremost was Arthur Leslie, his open generous face flushed with long exercise and with the pleasure of having accomplished his mission.

"How young the other is!" remarked Sir Robert to his son; "it will be easy to disguise him. He will pass for a gallant cavalier any day."

And, as the gentleman dismounted and advanced towards them, they perceived that though his frame was thin from toil of some sort, a grace hung about it of which nothing could divest him. The face was pale and worn, but there was something so noble in the broad open brow, and so sweet in the full dark eyes, that it drew one instinctively towards him.

"Welcome, Arthur," said Sir Robert, "and welcome to you too, sir; I pray you enter my poor house."

And while Henry stood outside to hear Arthur's narration, Sir Robert led his guest into his private cabinet. Mary was there, anxious to receive the first blessing of the priest. On seeing him, however, she uttered a sort of stifled cry, and gazed in mute wonder.

"Yes, Mary," said he, coming towards her, "your memory deceives you not. At last I have fulfilled my words, and 'come to Thoresby.'"

"And you are a priest?"

"Yes, thanks be to God, and a member of the Society of Jesus."

Mary threw herself on her knees for his blessing, and Sir Robert knelt beside her. They were soon joined by Henry and Arthur, and the secret of Walter's relationship was entrusted to the latter. It was likewise agreed that it were safer he should not be known by his usual name, and should adopt that of Walters as a *nom de guerre*, and less likely to draw suspicion. This arranged, Arthur took leave.

"And now, father," said Sir Robert—"that is a title dearer to us than that of kinsman—after you have seen my poor Blanche, you must take the repose you so much require."

"O, Blanche!" said Mary, after Walter had gone to his room, "Is it possible?—he a priest!—he who seemed formed for a life of sunshine, to be a missionary here! Oh! suppose he is taken, and they slay him with that cruel death;" and Mary burst into tears.

"But think of the end, the glorious reward, the martyr's crown," said Blanche, soothingly. "Surely we may say, he hath left all to follow Christ."

"All, indeed," said Mary. "Was he not fitted rightly to be the head of his noble house?"

"You have never heard much of him since you parted at Apswell, have you, Mary?"

"Only in fragments. I heard he and Lord Beauville had disputed, and Walter had returned to Rheims; then, when I heard of the marriage of Lady Constance, I could not but marvel if that had aught to do with it. Then came Isabel's unhappy marriage, and I wondered not that Walter did not return to England, but I thought he would seek some foreign court, or take service in some army. I never dreamed to see him return a mission priest. Truly, God's ways are wonderful."

Walter de Lisle a mission priest! It is no wonder that Mary is surprised. Let us look awhile at him, our dear Walter, whom we parted from in his hour of trial, long years ago. Methinks any one who had known him well would have found him out under any disguise, for there is the same radiant smile, the same sparkling eyes as of yore. True, there are lines written on the face which tell of conflict and of suffering, and the vigorous frame is thin, worn with frequent penance and untiring labor. Walter's life since we left him may be briefly traced, for long years of suffering oft leave little mark behind them. It would not be interesting, even intelligible, if we had accompanied him through those heavy days and nights

which followed his flight and his sacrifice. How his heart died within him, and he repented almost that he chose God instead of man; how life seemed quenched within him, and he wanted only to let time drift by him, and never to begin the struggle afresh. Constance Beauville had not been loved as many men love, as a vision sweet for the time, but soon forgotten when it passes away. Walter's love was but of one kind, strong as his whole nature, and deep as a torrent. He loved thus, or not at all. He would love God thus, or not at all. So Father Mordaunt saw, and thus he prayed; and the prayer was granted, the struggle was past; the vow spoken at Campian's feet became a reality. 'Twas the news of the martyrdom of this holy man that first aroused Walter from his slumber. He turned with his whole heart and energy to serve God, and he was rewarded even speedily. To him was given that call which even the angelic hosts may envy; and the low, still voice said to him, "Come and serve me, dearest of the sons of men. Come, speak in My name; hold My keys, and have jurisdiction over Me, your Lord and your God."

And so Walter became a priest, and then he prayed his superiors to send him on the English mission; for to die for the country he loved was his ambition. He was refused at first, and tried in various ways and by various toils, and at last his wish was granted; and strangely enough he was directed that the eastern coast should be the first scene of his labors, since no priest had been in those parts for long, and Sir Henry Thoresby had been advertised to meet a priest who would land on the coast. He had sent, little expecting to meet his own nephew.

Thoresby Hall was bright, indeed, now, for once more the Holy Sacrifice was offered, once more the fainting weary souls drew near, first to hear the words of pardon for in, as they laid down their burden at the feet of Christ, then to nourish their souls with the Bread of Life. Then peace reigned around, and thanksgivings many and fervent rose up from the little band of confessors of the faith in Thoresby Hall.

"Alas, father," said Blanche Thoresby, one day as Walter sat by her couch, "I fear me I often murmur at the lot that renders me in these troublous time a burden upon all."

"You would rather," said he, "have fulfilled your early wishes, and consecrated yourself to God in the cloister."

"Oh, yes, father; and I aspired to join the convent where day and night they watch in lowly adoration before the Blessed Sacrament, and pray continually for sinners, and I could have prayed for my country, our own dear England, and offered up all I did for her. What are you smiling at, father, was it too presumptuous?"

"Not so, my dear child," he answered; "but I smiled when I thought how our hopes vanish, and our plans are blown away, even as the wind brushes off the leaves. Blanche I would rather choose the lot you have than the one you marked out. Yes," continued he, and his face lit up with a radiance which scarcely seemed of earth, "to lie still in His arms must be best for His creatures. If we work for Him, we mix up self with our best deeds; but to be called to give up the pure hopes and visions of youth at His call—to lay down life even, and that not in one quick moment of agony, but through long years of suffering, this is blessed indeed; for wherefore do you suffer? Because you bore in your arms the tokens of His suffering love, the tokens of His great humiliation in subjecting Himself to His creatures; by this means you saved the life of a priest; that priest lived perchance to offer once again the Adorable Sacrifice, to reconcile one more sinner to God. Was not that enough? Oh! believe me, my daughter, God took these pure hopes of yours to heaven, and sent them down again loaded with benedictions. You prayed to watch before Him day and night, and behold He bids you do it with the incense of willing suffering. You loved Him in His Sacrament; He asked your life to be given in that love. Fear not, Blanche, if life be long before you, if you lie here helpless while others hurry to and fro in their Master's service. Nay, if even never again on earth before your eyes shall be raised up on high the

Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world, from your heart shall ascend a perpetual sacrifice, a perpetual adoration, as true and as worthy as if you were in the convent of your choice."

There was a long silence. Blanche's face was hidden in her hands, for such words needed no answer; words from which she gathered strength for many years to come.

Mary entered the room, and seeing them both silent, she sat down beside Blanche.

"Mary," said Walter, suddenly raising his head, "do you ever hear from Isabel?" The word was spoken with an effort.

Mary had been expecting this question, and schooling herself to meet it, yet now it came she trembled.

"No," she answered; "but you know we seldom write letters in these days of danger."

"When did you last hear? Now, Mary, be open with me; it is true kindness to tell me all you know. I have heard nothing but the fact of her unhappy marriage."

"Her letters," answered Mary, "well nigh ceased some time before she married. When I heard of the event, I wrote to her, and begged that nothing might interrupt the love between us. Then came a few lines, saying it was impossible for her, as I must see, to keep up intercourse with her relations. There was that in the spirit of those few words which showed me, that though she was pained at parting from me, her whole soul was wrapped up in her husband. It was therefore no entrapping of the late earl's; indeed I never could credit he could have bent Isabel's will."

"No," said Walter; "in the one letter she wrote, in which she bade me not to write, she said 'twas her own free choice. And you have never seen her?"

"Yes, once; two years since I was in London for a while; and we stood one day on the pier at Greenwich to see the queen take boat for Westminster. I had never seen her majesty, and 'twas a grand pageant; many ladies of the court were there, among them Isabel. She has grown into such majestic beauty, she looked fitter than Elizabeth to be the queen, albeit her highness hath a stately presence."

"Did Isabel recognize you?"

"Oh, yes, and turned pale as death; then casting on me a look of deep affection, she hastened forward to take her place in the boat that was awaiting her. There was a sadness in her beauty; her eye had that wistful gaze as of those looking to something beyond and indistinct. I heard a good deal about her during my stay in London, for Rachel contrived to come to me. She told me Isabel sorrows deeply she has no children, for it is galling to her husband's pride to have no heir. The failure of a male heir in the direct line is unknown in the Beauville family, and the estates must now pass to a distant relation, one whom Beauville dislikes. Another of her sorrows is caused by her husband's neglect. To love a wife, and be a favorite with the queen, is impossible in England. Lord Beauville prefers the queen's favor, and, indeed, Rachel saith he seems to have ceased to care for the beautiful creature he hath wedded, while she loves him still more wildly."

"It is too much as I feared," answered Walter, sadly, "for I have heard much of Lord Beauville, as Viscount Regnier, abroad; such news as would not make one imagine a woman linked to him could be happy. My poor Isabel! little did she imagine how vile a man she was wedding. But her religion, Mary—he does not oppose that, I trust; I suppose she is able to gain admission to the ambassadors' chapels?"

There was no answer.

"Did Rachel say nothing about this?"

Mary shook like a leaf; she could not speak.

The truth flashed for an instant upon him. He started to his feet.

"Tell me quickly, Mary," said he, his voice trembling with anguish; "it is not possible she can have forsaken her faith?"

"Alas!" sobbed Mary, "I fear she hath. She attends the Protestant services, and never seeks the Sacraments; I tried for long not to believe it, but I fear me it is true."

Walter silently left the room. He shut himself up

in his own chamber, and any who listened might have heard the sobs and groans that burst from a man in his agony, for if any soul was dear to the priest, how much more the one of his only sister!—the only tie he yet had to earth—an apostate! Oh, awful thought! unendurable to his ardent and loving soul. Yet, when he remembered his youth, and how once he had stood on the very brink of the precipice, Walter humbled himself exceedingly, and offered up his life as a sacrifice for this precious soul. And Walter, as he reviewed the past with the keen self-reproach of the holy, accused himself of neglect and coldness to his sister at Apswell Court. Had he kept free from that entanglement with Constance, and made Isabel the object of his affection, and resolutely broken down the icy barrier that she raised, a bond might have been cemented between them which Viscount Regnier would have no power to break. Perhaps together they might have gone abroad; perhaps to her, too, might have been given a priceless gift, and at this moment in some holy cloister she might be praying for him, in stead of his wrestling for her. Many hours passed ere the household at Thoresby saw Father de Lisle again, and many a night after that was spent in vigil and in penance, to atone, as far as might be, for the fault which seemed so grievous to the purified eye of the saint.

CHAPTER III.

"When he stood up in court and endured the contumely of upstart fanatics, the loss of his estate, the ruin of the prospects of his family, the filthy dungeon, the rack and the gallows, rather than renounce his religion, he did an act which the recording angel wrote down with an Alleluia on his lips."—*Rambler, February, 1857.*

For some weeks all went peacefully at Thoresby Hall, and Walter went backwards and forwards, seeking out Catholics, and enabling them to come to the Sacraments. Oftentimes, after having said Mass at Thoresby, and ere the sun had yet risen, he would go journeys of many miles to keep strange trusts with his flock. He always took with him the little pyx in which reposed the Adorable Sacrament; and often in the midst of great woods, far away from human habitation, he would give communion to some trembling and hunted Catholic.

"Are there any Catholics in Chelmsford jail?" inquired Walter, one night.

"Only Father Gerard, that I know of," answered Sir Robert, "if, indeed, he still lives."

"Oh! I must see him," exclaimed Walter.

"I fear me 'tis impossible; they are most savage in this county, and we have often tried, by bribes and otherwise, to gain a mission, but in vain. Luth, the jailer, is a perfect brute, and his wife, a noisy sort of good-natured woman, is far too afraid of him to venture on any risk, even though she loves good well."

"I must make the attempt," said Walter; "I shall go into Chelmsford, and reconnoitre."

* * * * *

"Now beshrew thee, Giles," exclaimed Mistress Margery Louth, the goodwife of the jailer of Chelmsford; "thou art enough to anger an archangel. What is the use of sending thee messages into town? Did I not tell thee again and again 'twas a green kirtle I wanted, and, behold, thou hast brought me brown taffety! and there thou standest, with thy great mouth wide open, staring at me as if I had made the mistake, and not thou; and now 'tis too late to send thee back again."

"Missess," began Giles, "the master told me to sweep the prisoners' yard afore ever I did thy errands. I!"

"Hold thy tongue, sirrah," cried the lady; "prating 'o thy master, in e'd, about my errands!—but it is the last time thou shalt go; take thy wage, and depart this very day,—go back to the pigs, and a fit companion, forsooth. And what may you want, young fellow?" said the lady sternly, as she perceived a man, dressed not only in the peasant's fustian, but with gar-

ments old and patched, and bearing evident marks of poverty, loitering near.

"Fair dame," answered the peasant, making a lowly reverence, "I am a stranger in these parts, and seek for work."

"And work you shall have, friend," exclaimed the lady greatly pleased at the respect with which she was addressed, "if you have a mind to take this idle varlet's place."

"And a precious hard one ye'll find it, too," muttered Giles, moving off.

"Now, get thee gone, sirrah," vociferated Mistress Louth, "and let me have no more of thy lying tongue." And then turning to the new applicant, she tried to soften down the disagreeables of the proffered situation, having a shrewd suspicion that the stranger would suit her purpose better than any other she could get.

The office of scavenger to the Chelmsford prison was not an office over and above desired by the good Essex people, entailing, as it did, hard and revolting labor, scanty fare, and coarse abuse from the jailer—a man of violent passions and petty tyranny.

Good cause had Mistress Louth to be pleased with her change. Joseph, as the new servant called himself, proved the most diligent and the most enduring, of any she ever had. After his long hours of work, he was ready to do her errands, and would execute them with a skill and patience which seemed to be unwearied. Neither did he ever murmur at the food—scarcely fit for a dog—that was often cast to him; the sauce of content and cheerfulness seemed always ready. So rapidly did Joseph rise in his mistress's esteem, and in the liking of his fellow-servants, the rough turnkeys of the prison, that it came to pass, that they required him, in addition to his own labors, to do part of their work, also, by going into the prisoners' cells, an office to which he appeared nothing loath.

"Joseph," cried Jack Nelgreave, the head turnkey, one day, swearing, according to his wont, a loud oath, "I am going to have a quart of ale along with my mate, and you can take the bread and water yonder to that old fool of a priest,—an old idiot, who might do as he lists if he would only go to church as the queen's grace doth direct, and, because he must be after his popish mummery, will get himself hung. Dost hear, varlet—wilt thou go?"

"Ay, Jack," quoth Joseph; "I have my work to do first. I reckon, if I go before night it will suffice?"

"Oh, ah, any time, so long as you give him the food, but we don't want him to die like a rat, to save friend Ralph the pleasure of hanging him." And Jack strode away to his supper.

Descending from the general court of the prison was a winding flight of steps, which led to the dungeons below. Each of these cells had a staircase leading from them, so that there was no communication one with the other. These stairs were long, and when Joseph arrived at the bottom, he gasped for breath. It took some minutes to accustom himself to the foul air he encountered; the torch he carried cast its wild glare on the thick stone walls down which the damp fell. A heavy-barred door, with massive lock, was the entrance.

With the key he bore, Joseph unlocked the door, entered the dungeon, and carefully locked himself in. He then gazed around. The cell was about twelve feet long, and six wide. One small aperture in the roof admitted all the light and air that reached the captive. There was no flooring, save the damp ground, a little straw thrown into a corner formed his only bed, and a few stones put together, his chair and table.

The occupant of the chamber was an old man. His face bore evidence of toil and disease, his hair and beard were both of silvery whiteness. When Joseph entered, the old man was kneeling; and accustomed generally to receive a few oaths from Jack with his daily provision, he did not move, but quietly prayed on.

"Father, bless me," said Joseph, kneeling before him.

The old man started.

"Are you a Catholic, my son?" said he, rising to his feet.

"Yes, father—a Catholic, and a priest; and, moreover, one you have known well—Walter de Lisle."

The sudden news was almost too much for Father Gerard. He staggered, and would have fallen, had not Walter caught him in his arms.

The silence of night fell on the prison. Some slept after their drunken revelry, some forgot their sorrows in slumber, some counted the weary hours as they passed, but to the two priests the time fled by, for they had much to say, and Father Gerard desired first to hear Walter's history since they parted.

"And you, father—still laboring, still suffering?"

"Yes," said the old priest, "About two years after your mother's death, I was apprehended and thrown into prison, but there were many others in the same case, and the governor and magistrate happened to be interested in some, and therefore they procured the banishment of all, and we went to France. There I stayed two years, till my health was strengthened; and my superiors at last, to my joy, allowed me to return on the English mission, and in it I labored till eight months since, when I was interrupted while saying Mass. Just as I had begun the *Gloria in excelsis*, the pursuivant rushed in, and took me in my vestments before the magistrate, and I was condemned to prison, and here I have remained, desiring but one thing, my dear son, to see a priest and have the sacraments; and that Christ has now granted me, praised be His name!"

"I perceive, father, you are not ironed," said Walter.

"I was to be," said the priest; "but whenever they attempted to put them on, they always fell off, so at last they gave up trying."

"You are cheerful under your cross, father," said Walter.

"Why should I not be?" said the priest. "My life draws to a close. If I am not called speedily to the gallows, I feel a fever in my veins, which I cannot survive; and it will not be long," continued he, looking up earnestly to the roof of his prison.

"What do you see, father?" said Walter.

The old man only smiled.

"Not when you are here; she only comes when I am alone."

"Who comes, father? tell me."

"The Mother with the Child," answered Father Gerard. "Oh! so glorious a vision; and this dark dungeon is full of heavenly light, and she bids me be of good cheer, and confess to the end the faith of her Son. My son," said he, turning towards him, "have you the Blessed Sacrament with you?"

"I have, father, all that is necessary to celebrate Mass. See, this stone in the wall will serve as our altar, and as soon as midnight chimes, I will begin."

Father Gerard sank back upon his straw, and Walter saw that he was dying. He hastened to give him a little of the wine he had brought with him, and the old man revived, and was able both to make his confession and hear that of Walter. Then Walter said his Mass. Soon after it was finished Father Gerard died.

No words can express the wrath and disappointment of Dame Louth when she found her new and pattern servant had, without staying to ask for wages, actually departed.

"No wonder she is wroth," said the other prison servants; "I warrant as 'twill be a long time ere she gets one like Joseph again."

Note.—The incident of the falling off of the irons and the vision of our Lady will be found in the "Life of Thomas Atkinson, Priest."

CHAPTER IV.

"Yet gladness walks in sorrow's guise,
When mutual love the burden bears;
As sunbeams part the weeping skies,
And rainbows rise from misty tears."

GERDA FAX.

THE soft moonlight was playing in gleams on the walls of Thoresby Hall, and the trees and bushes around stood out, some in silver brightness, some wrapped in gloom. The

same beams fell strangely among the leaves of the lime-grove, with its interlacing branches, and the perfume from the blossoms, always so much more powerful at night, floated on the air. The sweet influence of the scene did not seem lost upon the two persons who were pacing up and down the avenue.

"You have no *real* objection, my Mary," said Lord Clinton, stooping to try and see the face half-hidden on his shoulder; "for if you have, even my eager love shall not be selfish; but I have waited long, have I not? almost as long as Jacob for Rachel. It is full six years since, in this very spot, you gave me that dear assurance which has brightened life since then."

"No, Edward," answered Mary Thoresby, in a low and trembling voice; "you have never been selfish. You know that such has been the state of Blanche's health I have scarcely looked for her to live from month to month. I think now there seems appearance that her life of suffering may be longer, and since my marriage is to make no difference, is not to lead me from my father nor my suffering sister, I can no longer refuse that which—which—" Mary's face was once more hidden, and the lover understood the unspoken words.

"Then, my own Mary, why a sort of shade of melancholy which hangs over you when the subject is mentioned? Forgive me, but I am too anxious, too fearful, lest there should be some secret cause of grief or anxiety I do not know."

"Oh, no, it is not that, Edward; but how can any woman's heart not quail to think of a bridal such as mine will be, in secret and in fear, with no festive gathering, no joyous looks, such as attend the brides of half England when they wed? and then it is so strange that the occasion of my cousin's arrival should give us the opportunity—he whose life has been so strangely mixed up with a romance of love and suffering. It is only, Edward, that when I think of all these things,—of the sorrow that is around us, of the clouds that hang over our heads, of the woe and persecution that attend our faith—a doubt crosses my mind whether or not it is a time for 'marrying and giving in marriage.'"

"Away with those fears, my own love," answered Clinton; "you cannot doubt the right of a union that has sanction and blessing from all we have been bound to consult—your cousin, last of all, you know. Did I tell you I had a long conference with him last night?"

"I saw you together," she answered, "and I was so glad, I wanted you to know him better. Is he not noble?"

"He is, indeed; one of those to whom one looks up as scarcely having a place on earth."

"And, Edward, then to think what a fate awaits him!"

"Surely there is little fear for one allied to Lord Beauville," returned Clinton; "but I confess to you my desire is to see him ere long in London; *there*, close to those he is allied to, he might be safe, and yet do his work; but if arrested here, and thrown into Chelmsford jail, to linger there for many months, the chances of an appeal—'tis a sad prospect."

Mary sighed deeply. "And I have a feeling—a *warning*, as the peasants call it—that there will be a search made here ere long. Oh, if we had (as I know they have at many Catholic houses) a hiding-place where he could go! Did you ever see the one at Clare Hall, Edward?"

"Never."

"It is a little chamber behind the great chimney in the hall; a few stones take in and out, and often and often have the pursuers passed it by; but here,"—and she looked wistfully towards the hall, as a break in the trees enabled her to have a free view—"here I see no possibility."

"And yet," rejoined Lord Clinton, looking also at the house, "those walls of mighty thickness ought to be able to shelter a fugitive."

A cry almost escaped from Mary's lips; Clinton looked at her with a sudden horror.

"No, I see nothing, hear nothing," she answered; "but 'tis a sudden thought. Thou knowest Blanche's chamber?"

"Certainly I do."

"There is between the further wall of it and the wall of my father's rooms a space; 'tis narrow, but high, and there would

be air. Think you not it would do? In the very heart of the house no one could suspect."

"It seems likely," responded Clinton. "Blanche's room is the centre of the hall?"

"It is; at least, hers and my father's are both, and this division was put, I fancy, to correct some inequality in the building."

"How did you know of it?"

"When the house was repairing, it was such a nice dangerous place for us children to get into. Well do I remember how angry old Madge was with us, and how she said she would tell my mother, and the fear of alarming *her* made us promise good behavior for the future. Oh, I long to know if it is possible it can be used; we must wait till to-morrow morning for that, however, for I think Blanche by this time sleeps. We must go in now, dearest Edward." And they walked towards the house, the moonbeams shining full upon his manly form, supporting the fair and gentle girl whose fate had been cast in such rough circumstances. On reaching the hall they found Sir Robert, Henry, and Father de Lisle engaged in earnest conversation. Mary, blushing, would have passed by, and gone to her sister, but her father called her back.

"We have heard rumors from Arthur Leslie which warn us it is no longer safe for Father de Lisle to tarry amongst us," said Sir Robert; "and we must not seek to detain him, for now we have had the sacraments, for which we were well-nigh fainting; we must not selfishly endanger his safety, nor deprive others of his ministry, and so the day after to-morrow he purposes to go."

"But," said Walter, in his clear, sweet voice, "there is one more rite I would fain perform in this house, and if to-morrow night the next Mass I offer here could be that of your bridal, dear Mary, I should be very glad."

"To-morrow night!" almost gasped Mary, clinging to her father. "'Tis so sudden, so short."

"But it has been a long and sober wooing, my child," answered Sir Robert; and there are no bridal festivities to prepare, and you leave not your father's roof for another. I think you must consent, my Mary."

And Mary did consent, and then hastened to hide her confusion in her sister's arms.

Different, indeed, was the bridal of Mary Thoresby from the others which it has been our lot to describe.

It was just past midnight when the little household assembled in Blanche's chamber. Blanche, lying still on her couch, fixed her gaze lovingly on her sister. Mary wore a dress and veil of white, of the most simple kind, but old Madge's heart would have broken to have beheld her young mistress wedded in another color. A table, arranged as an altar, was placed at the foot of Blanche's couch, and the form of the crucified Master looked down upon the little group. The two altar-lights alone illuminated the room, for more display was deemed unwise; and so the rest of the large chamber, with the grim tapestry that hung its walls, remained in gloom. The lights shed their rays on the heads of the betrothed as they knelt before the priest,—that young priest, with his pale face and his glance of unearthly peace. Hushed was the silence while the low voices repeated their vows. No unmeaning words, and no perjured ones, were those which came from the lips of Mary and Clinton.

The long-tried and loving hearts were one at last, bound together in sacramental union. They were one now; hand clasped in hand, and heads bowed low, no power can part them now,—none save the angel of death can ever break that bond. The Mass goes on; and we, in these days of peace, who can scarce keep out distracting thoughts, who think the too frequent Mass almost wearisome, might almost envy those breathless worshippers while they follow every act of that stupendous mystery, might envy the rapt devotion of those communicants. The Mass was ended, the altar was removed, all trace was gone of the holy occupation, and Father de Lisle turned to give a short and parting exhortation to the little flock he was to leave on the morrow, when suddenly a violent

knocking at the outer gate silenced them. There was a hasty glance around; each one knew well it was the coming of the pursuers. Then Mary, coming forward quickly, proposed her plan.

"It is the only hope," said Sir Robert, in despair.

The porter was sent out to prolong, as best he might, by excuses, the entrance of the unwelcome guests. Some of the servants hurried to bed, with the hope of having been supposed to be there all the time. The others trusted that the sudden alarm would itself form an excuse for their appearance. Mary's bridal dress was hastily dragged off, and she sat down by the side of Blanche. While this was going on, some planks of the flooring had been raised, and Father de Lisle at once sprang into the living grave that apparently yawned before him.

"Are you safe?" whispered Henry Thoresby from above.

"Yes, quite, thank you," answered Walter.

"Is there space enough?"

"Yes, just enough," he answered. "It is like a coffin, but it is high, and there is plenty of air. Think no more of me for the present."

The plank was laid down again, and Henry hurried after his father, who stood in the hall, ready to receive the visitors that were now entering.

"Ha! Sir Robert," said Mr. Sheriff Parker, "I am sorry to disturb you at this time; but, indeed, good sir, these infringements of the law must not be permitted; if you will persist in disobeying her Majesty's Privy Council's most excellent command——"

"We will not argue that point, good Mr. Sheriff," said Sir Robert, with his calm and dignified manner; "but let me inquire the cause of this unwonted disturbance at night. To a man in whose house there lies as you know well, a daughter ill as mine, it is truly a matter of serious annoyance."

"Well, well, Sir Robert," said the sheriff, drawing himself up, "if you will harbor Popish priests in your house, you must bear the penalty. Now, produce him at once, I pray you, my good sir."

"Nay, nay, Master Sheriff," said Sir Robert; "an' thou hast come with—let me see how many—three clerks and four pursuivants to find one man, it would be a pity to do their work. Search for him if ye want, good masters, with all the speed ye can."

Then ensued one of those scenes so frequent then, and for two centuries afterwards in Catholic houses; the pursuivants scattered themselves over the house, every chamber was entered, cupboards opened, tapestry rent aside; they struck their wands on the walls, in order to find out hidden panels, and stamped on the floor, to see if that too were hollow. When they reached the door of Blanche's chamber, Henry was there.

"I pray you, good sir, to enter gently, if you *must* enter the sick-chamber of my sister."

"Most certainly we must," returned the sheriff; "'tis the most likely place to find the rebel, we trow. The ladies are ever compassionate towards the unfortunate."

Henry's color rose at the taunt; but resistance being useless and suspicious, he suffered them to enter. The sight of Blanche's pale face and helpless form, and Mary, scarcely less pale, sitting by her side, moderated a little the fury of the searchers. Still they walked around the room, pulled aside the tapestry, looked under Blanche's bed, opened a closet that stood in one corner, and finally struck their staves against the wall, behind which Walter was sheltered. Each blow went like a sharp pain through the hearts of the listeners; but the good walls of Thoresby were true, and gave back no echo.

"Nothing *there*," said one of the men; "'tis an unlikely room, too, for tricks of that kind, for 'tis the very centre of the house. Up-stairs, nearer the roof, is the more likely place for that kind of animals to burrow. I have routed out two or three in my time."

The men withdrew from Blanche's chamber, and rushed up-stairs. For the next hour or two the most frightful riot ensued, shouting and hallooing to each other, turning to curses as they found their game was missing.

"I shall be under the necessity, Sir Robert," said the sheriff, pompously, "of leaving three men in your house in guard, for the information I received was too certain to be mistaken, that there is a Popish priest in your house, and we are determined he shall not escape."

"As you will, Mr. Sheriff," said Sir Robert indifferently; "'tis a heavy expense and trouble, but to that I must submit as best I may. You will find, however, your precautions useless."

The three men did stay, and kept so sharp a watch that during the whole day no communication could possibly be held with Walter, and the keenest anxiety was entertained on his account by his friends. It had a terrible effect on poor Blanche, and Mary was terrified at the burning fever that came on, and the restless starts of agony at every noise. At supper-time the servants contrived to drug the wine, taken in plentiful quantities by the sheriff's men, and their sleep in consequence was too sound to be easily broken.

The planks were again removed, and Henry, kneeling down, called for Walter.

"Father, are you alive?"

"Yes, and very happy," answered Walter, cheerfully.

"There is plenty of air; not much light, truly, but I can say my office by heart."

"Here is some food."

"Thank you, thank you; I should like some of that."

And a basket was lowered by a string.

"How are you all?" said the priest. "How is Blanche? Poor child! it is hard for her. Tell her to be of good courage, and to think of the days of old. It is not prudent to speak longer, I suppose. God bless you all, my children, and comfort you."

This miserable state of affairs lasted for several days, and at night only could a brief communication be held with Walter. At length, finding that the men slept so soundly at night, it was determined to attempt an escape, and so, one night, Walter, by cords put under his arms, was drawn up from his living grave. He was covered with dust, and presented a singular appearance. Blanche was extremely ill with fever, Walter would stay to pray awhile beside her, then blessing her and all the others of the sorrowing household, he quitted Thoresby in company with Arthur Leslie.

Note.—"The house was searched upon All Souls' Day, when Mr. Bavin was making a sermon. The next day the house where I remained was searched; but we both escaped by a secret place, which was made at the foot of the stairs where we lay, going into a hay-barn."—*Life of Thomas Holford, Priest.*

In the year 1577, in the month of June, the Bishop of Exeter, being in his visitation at Truro, was requested by Mr. Greenfield, the sheriff of the county, and other busy men, to aid and assist them to search Mr. Tregian's house, where Mr. Maine did lay. After some deliberation, it was concluded that the sheriff and the bishop's chancellor, with divers gentlemen and their servants, should take the matter in hand.—*Life of Cuthbert Maine, Priest.*

CHAPTER V.

"Gaze not on worldly wither'd wood,
It fitteth not thy taste;
The flowers of everlasting spring
Do grow for thy repast."

POEMS BY FATHER SOUTHWELL.

"Rose, Rose," cried a baby voice, "please take me to the lady my mother."

"Willingly, darling one," said Rose, cheerfully, as she lifted from the ground a lovely boy, scarcely two years old, and passed with him along the corridor to the apartment of her mistress.

She entered the room without ceremony. It was the dressing, or "tiring" chamber of the young Duchess of Bertram. A small looking-glass was affixed to the wall, and the apartment bore marks of a gay and varied fancy in its owner. Articles of dress were scattered about, various fashions had been tried on and were thrown aside; the perfume of flowers and scents mingled together, and before the glass was sitting

the duchess herself, her sunny hair all let down over her white neck, and half shading her fair face, while she was busy in examining the workmanship of a curiously-carved ivory comb.

While Rose, with the child in her arms, steals in unobserved, we will take a glance at Constance, and see what ten years have done for her. They have left but little trace. She is more perfectly beautiful than before, though, perhaps, to our taste, time has robbed her of her early freshness. There is a wistfulness in the depth of her hazel eyes, but there are no lines on the smooth face which tell of care, of disappointment, or heartache. That look of secret grief, which, to a discerning eye, was visible under bridal smiles, is gone. Has the good Duke of Bertram, who in this space of time has grown stout and portly, more hospitable, more hearty, and more stupid than ever, succeeded, then, in winning his wife's depth of affection, and filling up the void in the yearning heart? Ah! no, but behold the secret is unravelled. Rose is close behind her now, and holding up the baby, his rosy face is reflected in the glass. With a cry of joy, the duchess turns.

"My boy! my beauty!"

He is in her arms, and in that sudden glow, and in that flood of joy, you learn the secret—Constance is a mother! Old dreams, old sorrows, pass her by and are gone.

"Well, Rose," said Constance, after having fondly caressed her child, "were you successful this morning? You stayed so long, I began to fear you have been disappointed."

"No, I was not disappointed, dear lady," said Rose; "I had all I wanted, and more; I had a strange joy—I suppose I may call it joy, though other feelings were mingled with it."

"What could it be?" exclaimed Constance.

"The priest to-day," said Rose, lowering her voice, "was my young lord, now Father de Lisle."

"Is it possible?" said the duchess; "and yet, after the first moment, I am not surprised. A priest's life, especially in these days, and *here*, is a life of such heroic self-sacrifice that it would well engage such a soul. Why do you wonder at it, Rose—you who admire all the things the saints did, which make me shudder?"

"No; I wondered only, in these days, when every Catholic family is of importance, that the last of the line of such an ancient house should have been suffered to give up all hope of perpetuating his."

"But the act of attainder has been passed."

"Has it? I did not know it, but even yet!"—

"I know what you would say, Rose—another monarch would restore it; but trust me, Elizabeth Tudor will outlive you and me, Rose, even though we may not die young."

Rose half smiled.

"You don't believe me? You will see; death and our most mighty sovereign will have a tough battle together, I prophesy. But tell me more, Rose; I am hungry for news. Is Father de Lisle stationed in London?"

"Yes, till he is betrayed, I suppose," said Rose, sadly.

"Oh, no fear of that; his alliance with our house is a most powerful protection. Let him but be cautious, and he may stay here for a long time together. What rejoicing for you, Rose! you will be able to get so much that makes your happiness."

"The Sacrament?—yes," and Rose's hands were clasped and her eyes raised for a moment; then she perceived that Constance's eyes were full of tears. "Dearest lady," said Rose, kneeling down beside her, "would that they were joy to you also!"

The duchess shook her head. "I was never meant to be a martyr or confessor, Rose. Your faith is not for me, but one cannot help envying, sometimes, the peace, the joy, the certainty, you seem to possess. See, Rose," she added, pointing to her boy, who had fallen asleep on her shoulder, "there is something 'o envy, to be a child like that, sleeping in its mother's arms in perfect peace."

"And so we may be also, dearest lady—so may we sleep and rest in His arms, who remembereth better than a mother."

"Yes, yes," said Constance, wearily: "'tis a lovely vision.

but a vision only, to such as me. Well, 'tis something to muse on—Walter de Lisle a priest! Rose, I will lay down this boy on my bed, and thou wilt arrange my hair, for I have tarried too long at my toilet."

"Yes, truly, and it is my fault," said Rose, rising quickly; "now I will do my best with all possible dispatch."

For ten years had Rose Ford been the waiting-maid of Constance, and it may easily be conceived how the tie had ripened into friendship. In times of hollowness and deception, when spies were in almost every household, Constance knew how to value the fidelity and affection of her attendant. She prized Rose as one of her greatest treasures, and with the continual thoughtfulness for others which made so lovely a part of her character, she strove in every way to make Rose happy. There was but one thing she knew Rose valued—the exercises of her religion, and all Constance's wit and influence were exercised to procure this comfort for Rose. Very often did she gain for her admission into the chapels of the foreign embassies, which were closed against ordinary strangers with great vigilance; and whenever there was a secret meeting of the Catholics in some private house, which took place as often as a priest could be found, Rose generally was present, by her mistress's contrivance. It was from one of these gatherings that she had returned on the morning we have described. And by Rose's hands large alms were sent by Constance to many a hunted priest, and many a starving Catholic. Many a perishing one had been revived by Constance's care; and yet Constance was not a Catholic. She was, indeed, one in heart and belief. There was not a point of faith that yet remained a difficulty; first with Walter, afterwards with Rose, she had become satisfied and convinced. But Constance counted the cost. The world, though sometimes it wearied her, was still too sweet to be relinquished. She put the thought from her, and went on winning love from all, and scattering benefits round her on all sides. With assistance and help furnished by the duchess, Rose crept into many a miserable hole, and fed the hungry and clothed the naked; and the prayer of the poor and needy—that all-powerful prayer of gratitude—went up for Constance to the throne of God. Not yet was the gift of faith granted—or rather of strength to profess the faith. But there was a shield around Constance—a shield of angel's wings. In early youth, and of rare beauty, the wife of a man she loved not, and who was too indolent and simple to care for or watch over her, Constance found herself in the midst of the court of Elizabeth; a court which formed a strange contrast to the rigid purity of that of Mary Tudor—a court ruled by a queen endowed with a woman's weakness, without, apparently one instinct of her nature—a woman who had taken the hard and reasoning part of the masculine nature, without one spark of man's tenderness or the refinement so constantly found in the sternest characters. In the court of Elizabeth there were dangers without end or limit, and few were those who passed through it unscathed, at least in reputation. But one of those few was Constance; the fair name of the Duchess of Bertram was untouched. Fascinating and beloved, admired and sought after, she yet seemed to possess a clue which guided her through the maze. She did not know how it was herself; she often confessed to Rose her astonishment that her path was so smooth; but Rose, who knew with what might those secret prayers were rising up around her, wondered not; but she knew there must be an end—that the duchess could not flutter through the world for ever; sorrow must come at last, and death; and Rose prayed on,

CHAPTER VI.

Doctor.—What a sigh is there! The heart is sorely charged.

Gentlewoman.—I would not have such a heart in my bosom for the dignity of the whole body.—*MACBETH.*

One of the finest houses in the Straud belonged to the Beauville family. It was kept up in state and splendour for under

the present earl there was a far greater expenditure than under the former, though he had been considered liberal. The principal rooms in the mansion were those which looked out on the river, and the long garden, sloping down to the banks, where a boat-house and convenience for landing and embarking were to be found, as well as the barge in which the earl and countess were wont to sail. We need hardly have said the countess, for of late years she had borne little part in festivities, and withdrawn into a retirement which it seemed strange, indeed, should be the choice of a young and beautiful woman, possessed of rank and wealth. It was said by some that the disappointment of having no family preyed upon the countess's spirits. For the first time for many centuries had the house of Beauville failed in an heir, and the world said his mortification had done much to estrange the earl from his wife, and render him as he was, conspicuous for his gallantries, even in an age and in a court where the license was most free.

One large apartment in the house was speak of had been called for many years the countess's bower, and had been occupied by successive noble ladies of Beauville. In this chamber sat Isabel, Countess of Beauville. The aspect of the "bower" had changed under her reign. There was neither lute nor embroidery-frame, nor were there the young ladies of rank, who generally were companions of a noble lady's solitary hours. The present countess loved to be alone; and the quantities of books piled up against the wall, the large table, covered with writing materials, near which she was sitting, showed plainly a taste cast in different directions. It was true, Isabel devoted herself entirely to study, and endeavored in such a pursuit to find some solace for her great unhappiness.

Ten years have strangely altered this beautiful creature; for though her beauty has truly ripened since she has passed from girl to woman, there are lines on the countenance which tell of much endured; there is a depth of grief in those large and lustrous eyes, which speak of tears—hot, blinding tears. At the moment we are describing, the countess was sitting at her writing-table, and holding in her hands a manuscript, evidently of age and value. She was giving her whole attention to deciphering it; at length she laid it down, and looking around the room as if to relieve her eyes, sighed deeply; it was not merely the sigh of the overtasked student.

At this moment, the arras which formed the doorway was pushed aside, and Rachel entered; the same faithful Rachel, who looked more than ten years older, and whose face wore also a look of sadness; but it was of a different kind from that of her mistress,—there was peace and resignation mingled with the grief of the simple-minded and faithful servant.

"An' it please you my lady," said Rachel, "a gentleman without craves to speak to you."

"On what business, and who is he?" said Isabel, sharply.

"I do not know, my lady; but he is one of noble birth, I am certain, from his bearing;—as he did not give his name, I did not like to ask."

"Well, you must admit him, I suppose; perhaps," and she smiled scornfully, "he has a favor to beg of the earl, and seeks my intercession, poor soul!"

Rachel waited till her mistress had finished, and then departed. In another minute she returned, ushering in a gentleman whose dress, though plain, showed him of gentle blood. Isabel scarcely glanced at him; she had risen and bowed with a stiff and haughty manner, which had become habitual to her; now re-seating herself, she motioned her visitor also to a seat, and then said: "What would you of me, sir?"

The stranger's eyes were fixed on Isabel, and he answered in a voice whose gentle and clear tones made her heart give a sudden thrill.

"I am come, madam, to ask your alms toward the necessities of our poor persecuted fellow Catholics. You know well, I doubt not, the distress they endure for the sake of our holy faith."

Isabel felt her heart stop beating for a moment; but her face did not change,—her mask was worn too well. Her tone was more haughty and cold still, as she replied—

"You mistake, sir, and I marvel the times teach you not more caution. The Earls of Beauville have been for many years Protestants."

"Yes, madam," again replied the thrilling voice, "the earls, but not the countesses. Surely I mistake not now, in thinking I address a daughter of De Lisle, a line which has remained faithful to God!"

For a moment Isabel turned pale, but she recovered herself quickly. She rose from her seat—

"You are taking a liberty which I consider unwarrantable in a stranger. Your errand here will, however, be safe with me; but depart instantly, sir, I entreat you, and leave me in peace."

"In peace, Isabel," said the stranger, in a low and altered tone, as he rose and came nearer to her; "and could I leave you in it, I would go joyfully."

Isabel started; she looked up into his face with a sudden glance of recognition, which changed into agony, and then sank on the ground, crouching at his feet.

"Have pity on me," she gasped. "Walter, have pity."

"Pity!" said he, stooping over her, and speaking in tones of the utmost tenderness. "My sister, my Isabel, I have not come to speak harsh words, but to bid you look to peace, and hope, and life. Ah, how miserable are you, my Isabel! I see it written on your face, and hear it in your voice; the reed on which you leant has pierced your hand; come back, then, to Him who will never fail you; on whom if you lean He will carry you through all sorrow. Come to the Good Shepherd, Isabel."

"No, no, Walter," she answered, raising her head; "it is impossible; I am lost, I know it. I dare not face my husband's anger. I will not leave him; I will not tear myself away even from the mocking shadow of his love. No,"—her voice grew calm and hard,—"*I have chosen; we both have chosen. You cast aside every hope of life to follow the Cross of Christ; I cast away faith and my hopes of heaven for earthly love; let us abide by our choice; verily we shall both have our reward.*"

"And our mother, Isabel," he answered,—"*have you forgotten her? have you forgotten her dying bed, and her last words, and her burial-day, and Father Gerard? He is dead now, Isabel—dead for love of Christ; he died in my arms, praying for you. Have you forgotten Castle de Lisle and the days of your happy, holy youth?*"

"No, I have not forgotten," she answered; "I can see each leaf on the rees that line the terraced walk; I can almost count the blades of grass; I can hear in the still night the ripple of the brook and the song of the passing bird. You have not recalled those memories—they haunt me ever, ever! Have pity on me, Walter; you have done your best; now leave me, for truly it is not safe for you to tarry long."

Walter drew back, and his face changed!—changed from the tender yearning with which he had looked on her, to the stern and yet sweet expression of one whose office is to rebuke.

"I have spoken to you," he said, "as brother to sister, as children of one mother, as those bound together with a tender human love; but I speak now as priest to sinner, as shepherd to a lost and wandering sheep. Not in ignorance have you sinned, but with the full light shining in your eyes. You sold your birthright for a mess of this world's miserable joys, and if you do not repent, great and awful will be the punishment. Oh, think you well, have you really chosen? When we sin wilfully, we say we are lost, 'tis a common speech; think you know what we mean? In flames forever; in unutterable torments; to have the face of God for ever turned in wrath upon us—God in whom we live, and move, and have our being. We fancy in this world we can hide from God. No such thing; He is around us, even the most sinful. His breath is our life. Isabel, do you choose death, eternal death, where the fire is not quenched?"

Isabel rose from the ground. Her face was pale but determined.

"You have done your duty, Walter, and now, farewell. I have chosen my own path, and will bear my own risks. Spare

me the agony of seeing you again, or worse, bidding my servants turn you from my doors. We have chosen: you for heaven—I for earth. Let me at least enjoy, as best I may, my share of the compact."

She stood waiting for his answer—hard, cold, and resolute. Walter's eyes did not seek hers; they were raised to heaven. He said, as if speaking to himself, "Yes, it is the last time, for the way must be long." He roused himself. "Farewell, my poor sister! May God, in His great mercy, have pity on you ere it is too late."

He was gone, and Isabel threw herself on the ground, and gave full vent to a storm of passionate grief. There struggling, almost with convulsions, her husband found her an hour afterwards.

"Are you distraught, Countess of Beauville?" said he, angrily; "or deem you this the way to keep me at your side, as you often beseech me? Let me have no more of it—let me, at least find peace when I do come home. Verily I do not trouble you too much with my company!"

"Beauville," said Isabel, kneeling at his feet, "I have given up all for you—even heaven itself—and you spurn me as you would the very dogs from your footstool. This is not just. Give me either the love for which I sold my soul, or give me back that soul."

"Your soul!" said her husband, scornfully; "does every girl who falls in love lose her soul? I trow heaven will be an empty place!"

"Beauville, do not mock me; you know well my meaning. Let me be reconciled with the faith I have denied with my lips, (God knows, not with my heart.)"

"No," by Heaven," said the earl, "some recusant has been with thee this very day, in this house—my house! Who is it, woman? An' thou tellest me not, I will kill thee at my feet."

But the violence of threat and manner had no effect on Isabel. She answered not, and did not shudder in his grasp of iron."

"I know it," he said, starting "'tis thy brother come hither—no other would have dared. Thou canst not deny it, Isabel."

The look of mute terror on the white face told him.

"Thou wilt not harm him?"

The earl grew cool directly.

"Tush, tush! I am not going to hurt the idiot; I have my hands too full for such employments. But one thing I must insist upon, that is, he comes hither no more, and that I have no more of these scenes with you in consequence.

"No, no!" said Isabel, eagerly; "you never shall. I will be still and will bear all, and he is not coming again; I bade him not. We have parted for aye."

"And a good thing too," said her husband carelessly. "Now, fair countess, if I were you, I would call my damsels to tire me afresh; for all these conflicts have disordered both dress and beauty."

And Isabel obeyed; and the earl, humming the air of a love song then in vogue, quitted the apartment.

CHAPTER VII.

"There's nothing in this world so sweet as love,
And, next to love, the sweetest thing is hate;
I've learn'd to hate, and therefore am revenged."

THE SPANISH STUDENT.

It was a bleak, cold day, and the east wind swept keenly along the streets, driving the clouds of dust before it, and making the passers-by shiver and hurry on more quickly. The streets were, indeed, almost empty and the few people in them all seemed those who were intent on business. Among them was one whose rapid step and the searching glances he cast around, marked him as evidently occupied upon some weighty matter. His cloak, of the finest cloth, and richly trimmed with sable, was wrapped round him, and drawn up close to his chin.

His long boots were lined and trimmed with the same fur. His hat was slouched over his face, as if he shrink from observation; while his whole appearance was that of one who would generally have sent others to do his bidding among the narrow and dirty streets along which he was winding his way. At length he reached his destination, when, on perceiving the tavern of the "Wild Boar," he at once entered the tap-room. It was crowded; loud talking and laughing were going on, and oaths and curses were flying in all directions. Near the fire was seated one group, consisting of about twelve or fifteen men. Most seemed to be of the lower ranks; some were half drunk, and each face displayed a variety only in vice and brutality. But on the outside of the group, his arm leaning on the back of his seat, his wine cup in his other hand, sat one whom a keen observer of human nature would at once detect to be a deeper sort of villain. He was slightly made, dressed better than his companions, and there were no marks of habitual intemperance on his somewhat pale face and deep-set glittering eyes. It was this man whom the eye of the stranger sought, and to him he advanced, and, laying his hand on his shoulder, said in a whisper, "A word with you in private, good master Eliot."

Eliot started from his seat, and, in an obsequious manner, led the gentleman into one of the small rooms that opened from the bar, closing the door after him. The parley lasted about ten minutes, and they came forth together, still conversing in whispers.

"The thing is easy enough," said Eliot, "now I understand your wishes, for, generally such of these fools that have relatives high in the state plume themselves on the privilege, and go on unmolested."

"See thou dost thy errand quickly, good master," returned the other, "and thy reward shall be ample."

"Well, well, my—sir, I would say, these things will take time. It is oftentimes a hard matter to hunt out these foxes from their lair; but you may depend on it, it is done at last."

"But I tell thee I cannot wait," replied the visitor. "Didst thou ever know what it is to be hungry for revenge?"

"Well, well," responded Eliot, with a look of diabolical malice darkening his face.

"Then," responded the other, "thou canst understand that it must be done at once, and I pay; but delay is fatal."

"I undertake it," answered Eliot, briefly, and with a hasty nod.

The stranger was about to depart, when the host, coming forward, exclaimed—

"Good, my masters; part ye not, surely, without tasting my good wine. Thou shalt pledge thy friend," continued he to the stranger.

He started for a moment in displeasure; some patrician blood was roused at the link between him and the low-born villain; but, controlling himself, he answered—

"Thou dost well to remind me, mine host. Fill us up two cups," and then taking one of them, he turned to Eliot, and said, "I pledge thee to the success of our enterprise." And after having drained the cup, he flung down a gold piece in payment, and strode out of the tavern.

Two days after this conversation, when the shades of evening were beginning to fall, Master Eliot was seen walking leisurely along the streets in the neighborhood of the "Wild Boar." He turned at last into a little court, where the houses were of the poorest kind. He entered one of them, and after ascending two pairs of stairs, he opened, without knocking, the door of a small and miserable room. In it Eliot—though not a tall man—could hardly stand upright. There was scarcely any furniture in the room; a heap of straw was in one corner, a large embroidery-frame, carefully covered over, stood in another, and near the hearth, upon which there were a few dying embers, sat, or half-crouched, a woman, attired in a cloak with a large hood, which was drawn partly over her head and face. She did not rise, or move, or start at Eliot's entrance. He seized a stool, which was near the work-frame, and sat down near her.

"You have no welcome for me, Maud?"

There was no answer.

Eliot uttered an oath. "Then if you can't be civil, you must attend to me, for I have business with you, and desire not to tarry long in this accursed hole."

Maud raised her head, and displayed a face so pale and haggard, so marked and seamed with suffering, that it might have provoked pity in the most heartless. Eliot did seem for a moment staggered.

"How awfully ill thou lookest, Maud! Why wilt thou be so obstinate, and refuse the gold I would gladly give thee? H' re, take!" and he put his hand in his pocket.

"No," said Maud, speaking for the first time, in a low and hollow voice. "We have settled that point before. No gold for a *thrice*. Better hunger, better death."

Eliot responded with another imprecation.

"Then starve, an' thou listest; and now harken. The Catholic serving-maiden of the Duchess of Bertram comes hither to-morrow."

A look of astonishment was visible on Maud's face.

"Ah, thinkest thou I do not know who comes hither? Never dream, Maud, to hide from me. I would follow thee and track thee to the land's end."

"Well," said Maud, bitterly, "supposing she does come hither, what harm is that? Surely the tiring-woman of the Protestant duchess is not an object of thy vengeance?"

"I desire that you find out from her to-morrow where a certain priest called De Lisle, a kinsman of her mistress, is staying."

"No," said Maud, "I will do no such thing. Thou shalt harm no one through me. Work thy devilish trade I never will."

Eliot's pale face was paler still with passion; he did not answer, but rising, and going towards the heap of straw, he lifted the coverings, and underneath there lay a child, a little girl of three years old.

"What dost thou there?" exclaimed Maud, springing after him frantically. "Wilt harm my child?"

"She must awake, and go with me."

"Whither?"

"Where I please. I shall do as I list; she is as my child, and I have absolute power over her. She goes with me, and you will look no more on her face."

"Monster! thou canst not—darest not do this crime."

"If thou refuse my request. Do my bidding, and you shall stay in peace together."

Maud fell on her knees and clasped her hands."

"It is like staining my hands with blood, and through her; deceit to her who has but just taught me to hope for mercy, has just led me back to God with her angel voice! Eliot! thou meanest death to this man?"

"Certainly not," returned he; "and I would have told thee so, an' thou hadst been reasonable. Is it likely the kinsman of the duchess, and the brother of Lady Beauville should die? But he will be fined heavily, and half, at least, will be the informer's. I want gold—must have it; that is the whole."

"Art thou deceiving me?" cried Maud. "If this be all, I could do it."

"Judge for yourself, fool," answered he. "What object can I have in deceiving thee? And judge quickly, or I take the child."

"I consent," said Maud, hastily; "I will do it. God forgive me! Now leave me, in mercy. To-morrow night, if thou wilt come, I will have the news ready."

Without another word, Eliot departed.

CHAPTER VIII.

"Right manfully his cross he bore,
And ran his race of torments sore
For Thee he pour'd his life away,
With Thee he lives in endless day."

LYRA CATHOLICA.

It was scarcely light on a day in early summer, and the stillness which is peculiar to the hour before sunrise hung over the country. It was a bare and desolate-looking piece of ground, in the outskirts of London; the ground was flat and the trees were few, so that a lonely farm-house, which in itself was most insignificant, stood out as a remarkable object for some distance. This farm-house was indeed a lone one; the straggling outskirts of town ceased before Tyborne was reached, and the little villages of Fulham and Hammersmith were some miles distant.

Towards this house, at the early hour we have mentioned, several persons were seen approaching. Each corner scrutinized the other with a somewhat searching glance, and each and all hesitated who should be the first to approach the door. At length a sturdy yeoman, who was accompanied by his wife and daughter, broke the spell. There was no instant admittance; the door was strongly barred and girded with iron; a small grating enabled those within to see and hold parley with the comers, and a man of strong and stalwart appearance was behind the grating."

"And who comes hither?" he said.

"Friends," was the answer.

"What is the pass?"

"In this I trust," was the reply; and the bolts were slowly withdrawn, and the party entered.

The same ceremony was gone through with each successive party, till at last a goodly number were assembled. It was observable that these visitors entered slowly and silently, and all ascended the stairs which led to a large room at the back of the house. A table at the end of this unfurnished room, with its white covering, its tapers and crucifix, told plainly that the Catholics round this part of London had come thither for the exercise of their proscribed religion. Through the door of an adjoining room could be dimly seen, half in shade, the figure of one in priestly robes, who was hearing the confessions of those who desired to make them before Mass. Almost every one in the congregation had this purpose, for the administration of the Sacraments being so rare, they were precious indeed to the fainting souls of the Catholics.

At length this duty was concluded and the priest began to put on his vestments for Mass. It was a feast of our Lady, and he was vested in white. They were not gorgeous, those vestments—not such as gleam with jewels or are rich with costly lace—they were poor and shabby; but the holy symbols which the Church has attached to each article worn by a priest at Mass, had a more awful significance in those days of dread and terror, and one might have judged from the expression on the face of Father de Lisle, that his thoughts were indeed with the Passion of his Lord, as he put on the amice in token of His blindfolding, and bound round his waist and neck the stole and girdle that were the shadows of the bonds of JESUS.

"Shall I ever forget," said Arthur Leslie, long years after—"shall I ever forget that Mass—the deep and profound silence in the room—the rapt devotion of each worshipper? How shall I describe the priest? He moved as one might fancy an angel would have done; and surely an almost angelic purity hung about him. His clear, melodious voice sounded as if from heaven; and I saw plainly—and many others with me—rays of light which played round his head.* Oh! with what gaze those eyes were fixed upon the Host at elevation. It seemed like faith dawning into vision! A secret warning told me this would be his last Mass; and my thoughts wandered for a moment to a description he had once given me of his first Mass. That was said in the Cathedral at Rheims, while Father Mordaunt guided his hands, and more than one

bishop, with a vast concourse of clergy, were present. The high rank of the young priest, his future to be spent in blood-shedding England, excited much interest, and drew a large multitude. Triumphantly the Mass was sung, and at its close knights and ladies of noble rank, together with crowds of poor, came to kiss the anointed hands of the new priest. Such was his first Mass; now look upon his last.

"In an empty 'upper chamber,' in a desolate house, a few trembling and hunted people to assist, who held their breath with fear. But which was most like the first and last Mass of the First Priest? More like it still it grew. Communion was nearly over—the last circle of recipients were kneeling around the altar, waiting for the Bread of Life, when the sudden trampling of horses around the house, the thundering of staves against the door, and the loud cries of 'Open in the queen's name,' told that, like his Lord, the servant too was betrayed."

"Father, you must hide!" was hastily whispered; but Walter was as though he heard it not. He moved from one to the other, giving the Holy Communion, and then turned to finish the Mass. No one said any more; all felt it would be useless. Father de Lisle feared instant death far less than any profaning of the Holy Mysteries. It was useless, also, to contend with the armed force who were battling at the portal, or to enrage them with any further delay; so the heavy door swung back, and the party of pursuivants, headed by Eliot, entered.

"Some had better stay outside," said Eliot to the captain of the guard, "lest haply some foul play chance us in this hideous hole;" and he then rushed up stairs with frantic haste, as if endowed with the scent of a bloodhound.

Walter de Lisle was reading the last Gospel; so calm was his manner, so unmoved the tones of his voice, that Eliot even stood still. Walter turned from the altar and faced his foes,

"Seize him!" said Eliot; and two of the pursuivants laid hands on him.

"I shall not resist," said the priest, with dignity; "only suffer me, I pray you, to take off the garments of mine office, which are not seemly to wear save for the functions."

"Yes, let him take off those rags of papistry," said Eliot; "and, Will" (to one of the men), "where is that fool's coat thou despoiled that poor fool of as we rode hither? Thinkest thou not it would do marvellously well to attire *this* fool with?"

The men laughed coarsely, and the garment was produced. It was the fool's coat, made of patchwork of various gay colors, and of grotesque design, such as was worn by the jesters then attached to the household of each person of distinction.

"But before we do so," said Eliot "thou must be searched, Master de Lisle."

Then for the first time Arthur saw his friend's face change. He came eagerly forward to offer money, that the indignity might be omitted, but Eliot was roused.

"There is some secret then," he exclaimed; "search him instantly."

It was not the fear of insult that made the confessor's heart quail; but Walter, like most other priests of the times, obliged to travel from place to place, always carried on his breast a silver pyx, in which rested the Blessed Sacrament; and a pang of unutterable horror took possession of his mind at the thought of the profanation which would now be offered to the body of the Lord.

"Shame on my faithless heart!" said he afterwards to Arthur; "why did I not know that He who once passed through the midst of them, and went His way, could triumph again?"

They dragged Walter into another room, Arthur alone accompanying him, and they began the search, seasoning it with coarse jokes and ribaldry, excited by Eliot. Loud was the laugh when they discovered the hair shirt and the girdle of steel, with which the saint kept down the flesh; but though every garment was dragged from him, there was visible to no mortal eye save the priest's, the consecrated pyx. He felt its sweet weight on his bosom, and rude hands came close to it, and seemed as if they were laid upon it, and yet it was never discovered. At length the search was ended, and Walter re-

sumed his clothes*. The soldiers arrayed him in the fool's coat,† and dragging him down stairs, prepared to tie him hand and foot across a horse.

"Thou art grateful for this kind of treatment, art thou not, master?" said Eliot, mockingly. "There is no hope left for me, after the grievous sin of thus handling thee!"

"Nay, Master Eliot," said Walter, "I forgive thee from my heart; and wouldst thou but do penance, and confess thy sin, I would that it were by my voice thou shouldst hear the words of absolution."‡

Eliot replied only by striking him, and ordering the men to hurry; and so, in this guise, the journey to Newgate was made.

As they advanced into town, a mob began to collect, and, swayed as they generally are by a wanton desire of mischief, amused themselves by hooting, shouting, and throwing mud and stones at Walter.

The gates of Newgate were reached, and here Arthur, who had followed his friend, was compelled to leave him.

Once again was the Countess Beauville sitting in her bower, but though it is not many days since we last saw her there, there is yet a change in her beautiful face—the sadness has deepened, and there is a shadow of despair mingled with it. Her hands clench, more than hold her books, and her foot taps against the floor with the nervous motion of those who suffer mentally. When she hears the slightest noise, she starts and trembles; and when, therefore, the arras was put aside with a hasty hand, she started to her feet in sudden terror; but on perceiving the intruder was only her sister-in-law, the Duchess of Bertram, she re-seated herself, and all her haughty composure came back in an instant. Her eyes did certainly rest on Constance with surprise, for the appearance of the fair duchess was different from its wont. Her dress was disordered, and her manner perturbed, and there was a strange anxiety on the face of her who generally went smiling through life. She came up to Isabel, saying, "Do you know what I have come to speak about?" The countess had a touch of her old scorn in her voice, as she answered—

"Certainly not."

"Then I have painful news to tell you: your brother is in Newgate."

Isabel turned very pale, and gasped for breath.

"Dear Isabel," went on Constance, "do not be alarmed, 'tis but for a day; nor one word from Beauville is all-powerful with Walsingham. But there is now some frightful mistake, and it is about that I hurried to speak. On hearing of the sad event, I sent a message to Newgate, to tell the governor to whom Father de Lisle was allied, and to beg him to treat him with all courtesy till his kinsmen could procure his release; and the man came back to say the governor laughed, and said it was Lord Beauville himself who had put De Lisle into prison, and wished to pursue him to the uttermost."

"'Tis false; they lie foully," said Isabel, starting to her feet, her eyes glaring. "He never did this thing."

"I know it, I feel sure of it," answered Constance. "Be calm, dearest Isabel, and all will yet be well."

As she spoke, the arras was lifted and the earl entered. Isabel sprang towards him.

"Tell me, thou hast not done this thing! I know thou hast not, canst not."

"What means this?" said the earl; "what is all this turmoil?"

"It is my fault, Beauville," said his sister; "I have roused Isabel to agony by news I have brought her of her brother, not only that he is in Newgate, but that by some strange mistake the governor asserts it is by thy contrivance."

"Thou hast not?" said Isabel, again grasping his hand.

The earl looked at her. "Yes, I have."

There was a moment's silence. Isabel gazed at him as if she did not comprehend; and the look of malice in his face made Constance turn faint. "I have," said the earl; "and hear me yet; this man is your brother, Isabel, but he is

* A fact.

† See Chailoner.

‡ See "Life of Campian."

my enemy.—I hate him, and thou knowest not, perhaps, what means a Beauville's hate; know it then now: every torture that law permits shall be executed upon that man, and at last a shameful death. If he recant, well,—the law saves him; but if not, as sure as Elizabeth is queen and Walsingham hath power, Walter de Lisle is doomed."

She listened, and she was still, quite still, her face pale and ghastly; she clasped her hands together, and looked up to heaven, and then she said, and the tones of her voice rang in Constance's ear for long years afterwards,—“O God, O God, my punishment is greater than I can bear!”

And in these words Constance discerned not only the anguish for Walter, but the breaking of the heart's idol, the snapping of a life's hope. She moved towards the door, but ere she reached it, she sank on the ground insensible. Lord Beauville called for Rachel, and without a word to his sister, left the room. Constance went home, bidding Rachel send word how her mistress was. Before night she heard the countess was raving in brain fever.

Note.—“It must be here observed that Mr. Nappier had his *piz* with him, and in it two consecrated Hosts; and as he owned to me several times, when he heard Sir Francis give the constable orders to search, he was under the greatest concern, for fear lest the Blessed Sacrament should fall into their hands, and be exposed to some profane or sacrilegious treatment. And he further assured me, not without tears in his eyes, that, whereas the search was most strict, even so far that his shoes were pulled off in the presence of the justice, that nothing might escape them; and whereas, also in searching his pockets, the constable to his feeling, had his hands many times both upon the *piz* and a small reliquary yet neither of them were discovered, to the great surprise and no less joy of the good man.”—*Life of George Nappier, Priest.*

“Here on the next day, Mr. Ganings being at the consecration, Topcliffe, the arch priest-catcher, with other officers, came in and broke open the chamber door, where he was celebrating; . . . and the more to make him a scoff to the people, they vested him in a ridiculous fool's coat, which they found in Mr. Wells' house.”—*Life of Edmund Ganings, Priest.*

CHAPTER IX.

“Oh, what a change hath the prison wrought,
Since we gazed upon him last;
And mournful the lessons his thin frame taught,
Of the sufferings he had pass'd.”

NEALE.

In Newgate, Walter was at first thrown into the common prison. The ward or dungeon in which he was placed, was full of prisoners accused of the most revolting crimes. They were pent up like a set of wild beasts, with hardly light or air, and the stench of the place was so insupportable, that Walter on his entrance almost fainted. He was heavily ironed, and left to find his place as he could. The appearance of such a stranger among them naturally excited the curiosity of the prisoners; and Walter seemed able from the first to exercise a sort of control over them, and the worst language was hushed in his presence, though enough that was horrible went on. The only sort of seat in the dungeon was a kind of bench in the wall, and this was assigned to Walter, who lay there at night, and when the prison was comparatively still, found time to pray; for his spirit, yearning for the salvation of others, was tortured by the sights and sounds of sin around him. In this dungeon he became an apostle, and when he preached to the poor wretches around him, all listened and none mocked; and during the ten or twelve days he was immured there, several were won by his words to change their lives. It was the rumor of this change that induced the governor to alter Walter's position. He was removed from his ward, his irons were struck off, and he was employed as one of the scavengers. From early morning until night, Walter was kept at work, and the most menial offices were his; and when, worn out with exertion, he would sometimes rest for a few minutes, a blow or a kick roused him.

“I will humble him somehow,” said the governor; and yet as the days went on, the pale face wore still its look of peace and of perfect serenity.

“Here, prisoner,” said one of the under-jailers, approaching him one day, “Here is other work for you; follow me.”

Walter followed him into a different part of the prison, along

many passages, and down an immense flight of steps. At length Walter found himself in a dungeon, which he immediately recognized as the well-known torture chamber. Several executioners stood ready; while at a table sat the governor, and Eliot by his side, ready to take down in writing the prisoner's confessions.

“Ha! Master de Lisle!” said Eliot, “it is determined by the Privy Council to interrogate you concerning certain matters. They desire to know exactly at what houses you tarried during your stay in England, the names of the persons who at any time confessed to you, or who were by you reconciled to the Church of Rome.”

“All these questions,” answered Walter, “I decline to answer.”

“Put the prisoner on the rack,” said Eliot, coolly; and two men seized Walter, and after stripping off some of his upper clothing, placed him in the rack. It was a large frame of oak, raised three feet from the ground. Walter was laid on his back upon the floor, his wrists and ankles were then fastened by cords to rollers attached to each end of the frame.

Eliot now began to repeat his questions, and as Walter continued silent the rollers began to creak and turn. For some time the sufferer was quite still; but as the operation went on, the agony forced out words, but they were words only of prayer. The Name that is above every name was earnestly invoked, and the “Help of the afflicted” was appealed unto. At length Walter fainted, and was then released from his trial.

“Take him hence, jailer,” said Eliot. “Let him recover his strength, and then we will try the gauntlets and the scavenger's daughter. Ah, I deem we will break that haughty will at last, when we let torture do its worst.”

From this time Walter had a cell to himself, and better food. He was also allowed occasional intercourse with his friends; for Eliot hoped by this means to extract further information from him. Arthur Leslie, whose one employment was to endeavor, by every possible means, to procure a pardon for him, but as yet without success, came frequently.

No sooner was Walter recovered, than Eliot fulfilled his threat, and he again visited the torture-chamber. This time Walter was not taken by surprise, and he had been daily arming himself for the conflict. On his arrival at the door of the dungeon, he fell on his knees, and, looking up to heaven,* cried for help.

“Strengthen me, O, Lord, my God; by the remembrance of Thy scourging and Thy bitter passion, help me in this hour.”

“We will try thee to-day with the bracelets,” said Eliot, as Walter entered, “and see if they will not squeeze out the truth from thee, thou obstinate villain.”

“God forgive thee, Master Eliot,” said Walter, looking at him. “I pray that none may deal with thee as thou dost with me.”

“Do not answer me,” cried Eliot, furiously. “Ho! varlets there: let us not lose time.”

Walter was now led to one end of the room. From side to side of the ceiling stretched a long and heavy wooden beam. He was then made to mount three planks of wood, which brought him sufficiently near the beam to enable his hands to be thrust into iron rings, which thus attached him to it. By means of a screw, these gradually compressed the wrists. As soon as it was made fast, the men withdrew the lower piece of wood, causing a sudden jerk and a rush of blood through the whole body. The two other planks were then withdrawn, and Walter was suspended in the air. The anguish of this posture was past words to describe.

“Wilt thou come down from the cross?” was said, if not in words, in deed.

“Say but one word,” exclaimed Eliot; “name one of those who have confessed to thee, and thou art released.”

And the answer was, “Jesu, help! Lord Jesu, forsake me not! By Thy three hours on the tree, save Thy servant!”

“He has fainted, Master Eliot,” said one of the men; “will you that we let him down?”

* See “Life of Campian.”

"Replace the wood under his feet," said Eliot, "throw water over him."

It was done, and in a few minutes Walter recovered. He drank some of the water they offered him, and felt revived.

"Wilt thou speak now?" demanded Eliot.

Walter made no answer.

"Let the torture continue, then," said Eliot, coolly going back to his seat.

The wood was taken away, and the screws again began to work, till the gauntlets were literally buried in the flesh! Again and again the torture recommenced. It was five hours before Eliot was weary of his torturous work, and Walter was carried back to his cell. There was Arthur waiting for him, and tears flowed from his eyes as he beheld the bruised and worn frame of his friend.

"Nay, hush! my Arthur," said Walter, in answer to his words of burning indignation; "it pains me to hear thee rave thus. I thank God from my heart for permitting me to witness for His name. You know not how near it seems to bring me to the Cross; how it makes me realize in some sort the anguish of Calvary."

"But it is not witnessing for Christ," cried Arthur, indignantly; "think you not that in history it will be recorded only that ye died as traitors? Think ye not that Walsingham can cast a veil over the atrocities of Elizabeth's reign?"

"There is One stronger than an earthly governor," replied Walter. "In His own good time the truth shall be told, and England know for what cause we suffer. Give me some water, Arthur, an' it please you,—my thirst is burning. Ah, my friend, there was One who thirsted, and had no water to drink."

"I am determined to conquer him," said Eliot; "even if I kill him in the torture, I will do it."

And so, day after day, Walter was dragged forth—sometimes stretched on the rack, sometimes suspended by the gauntlets, till Eliot, wearied with his patience and endurance, resolved to resort to the fearful punishment known as the scavenger's daughter, which, being of so frightful a nature, was seldom used. The governor of Newgate shrank back when this design was mentioned, but De Lisle's torturing had been given into Eliot's hands, and he had no power to interfere.

Walter, who had been allowed some days' respite from torment, had partially recovered strength; moreover, by Arthur's contrivance, a disguised priest had gained admittance to him, and he had thus received consolation and communion, and his spirit was strengthened within him, and he went calmly when he was called, feeling sure something more cruel than usual was in prospect.

In the centre of the room there was a large hoop of iron, which opened and fastened with a hinge. Water was made to kneel on the pavement, and compress his body as much as possible. One executioner knelt upon his shoulders, while others passed the hoop under his legs. They then pressed the victim's body till they were able to fasten the hoop over the back. This done, they began to question the sufferer. "One word, one name," went on the tempter; and the reply was only in a low moan, and sometimes the words would come out, "Jesu, Jesu." The blood gushed plentifully from Walter's nostrils, and the governor turned away in horror. Eliot went on unconcernedly—

"'Tis thy own fault. Answer me but one word—the names of recusants whom thou hast received to confession—and thou art free."

"Dear Lord and Master," said the martyr, "remember me."

Near the entrance of the chamber stood a man wrapped in a cloak, who had hitherto passed for one of the prison attendants; he had been quivering with agony, and now came forward, and throwing himself by Walter, said, in a broken voice, "I can bear it no longer; speak, father, I entreat thee, and save thyself."

Walter's half-glaring eyes were turned upon him. "His rod and His staff, they comfort me. More pain, Lord, if thou wilt, and more patience," he said.

"Ah, who is this that dares interrupt the scene?" cried Eliot, furiously; "another recusant, I dare say. To prison with him!"

"An' by your leave, not so fast, Master Eliot," said the governor: "'tis a kinsman of mine, and a Protestant, but a young man of noble parts, who loves not to witness such hang-dog work. Is it your will the torture ceases? it hath lasted an hour, and it were too long, to my mind."

"The time allowed in extreme cases of obstinacy is an hour and a half," said Eliot, "and I shall insist on it to-day."

For another half-hour the anguish went on. At its close Walter was taken out insensible, and with drops of blood trickling from his hands and feet; it was his last racking.

A few days afterwards the governor entered Walter's cell.

"To-morrow being Sunday, good Master de Lisle," said he, "some of our divines are anxious to hold a disputation with you on the doctrines of Popery, being desirous to convince you of the error of your ways. Doth it please you to attend?"

"At any other time, sir," returned Walter, "I will gladly do my poor best to defend our cause; but now I am so enfeebled, you perceive, I have scarce power of utterance."

"True, true," said the governor, compassionately; "I see it, and I am sorry, for it will be said, of course, that you fear to come."

"Nay, then," said Walter, "I will essay to be there, at all events, and when the good masters perceive my state, they will see clearly how unfit an antagonist I am. Where is the meeting to be?"

"In the chapel," answered the governor; "at one of the clock you shall be sent for."

The following day, at the appointed hour, Walter was conducted between two jailers. The chapel was crowded with people, and one minister was standing in the desk for prayer, while the others were seated near him. Close by them, and so conspicuously in sight of all, a chair was placed for Walter. He had hardly reached it when one minister began to read the "Service of Common Prayer." Instantly Walter perceived the trick, and, weak as he was, he endeavored to reach the door and escape: but it was closely shut, and his jailers held him by force in his seat. Then he began to recite aloud the Vespers for the day; and, much as the exertion cost him, his loud and melodious voice drowned that of the reader. There was great confusion; many rose to their feet, many whispered, some talked aloud; the minister raised his voice higher and higher; but, above it all, and through the din, rose up the clear words of triumph and faith—"Quis sicut Dominus Deus noster; qui in altis habitat, et humilia respicit in cælo et in terra."*

At length the service, if it may be called so, was brought to a conclusion, and the minister in towering anger descended the stairs. The men released their hold on Walter; he instantly rose, and, getting on the chair, exclaimed in a loud voice—

"Hearken, good people; I call Almighty God and His holy angels to be my witness, I came not hither of my own will, but by stratagem; and when I would have departed, have been kept by force; I would rather die a thousand deaths than communicate in an heretical worship."†

"Thou art mad," said the governor, coming forward; "thou mightst have had life and liberty, hadst thou behaved quietly here to-day. Thy blood be on thy head; I wash my hands of thee, and can do no more;—get thee back to prison."

Note.—He was so cruelly torn and rent upon the torture, that he told a friend of his that he thought they meant to make away with him in that manner.—*Life of Edmund Campian.*

*Mr White, lying in Bridewell at the mercy of the inhuman Topcliffe or Topcliffe besides other cruel treatment, was once hung up for eight hours together by the hands in iron manacles, to oblige him to confess in whose houses he had said Mass.—*Life of Eustachius White.*

†"Who is like the Lord our God, who dwelleth on high, and respecteth the lowly in heaven and on earth."

†See "*Life of William Davies, Priest.*"

CHAPTER X.

"Campian I desired to imitate, whom only love for his country and zeal for the house of God consumed before his time. You shall not want priests. We were three hundred in England; you have put a hundred to death; the other two hundred are left. When they are gone, two hundred more are ready to come in their places; and for my part, I hope my death will do more good than ever my life could have done."—WILLIAM HARRINGTON, Priest.

On a certain sultry day in July, the court at King's Bench was crowded, for it was understood the trial of Walter de Lisle would come on that day, and the strong interest always felt at the trial of recusants was heightened in this case.

The gallery was occupied chiefly by ladies, and among them were two who sat forward so as to command a good view of the court, and those who knew the great ones of the time might have recognized them as being the French ambassadress and the Duchess of Bertram.

A cause was going on as they entered. A tall, fine-looking man was standing at the bar, and clinging to his arm was a lady, pale as death, whose suffering in the position she found herself was evidently extreme.

"Verily, Master Lydar," said the judge, "the charges have been proved against thee, both of obstinately refusing to go to church, and also of harboring a priest, one Master Paterson, now awaiting his trial in the prison of Bridewell; thou art certainly guilty, Master Lydar, and if I give sentence, thou must pay fines which will swallow up, if I mistake not, the whole of thy estate. But the queen is merciful; repent of thy recusancy, go to church, and all is forgiven."

A red flush burnt on Master Lydar's face; he looked at his wife, whose glance of anguish met his; he thought of his children, brought to beggary, and the lie trembled on his lips.

"Very well, my lord, I submit—I will go to church."

There was a moment's pause, and then, ere the judge could answer, the silence was broken by a clear thrilling voice, both powerful and sweet—

"John Lydar, what hast thou done?"

A sudden rustle ran through the court; every head was turned in one direction. Inside the bar, attended by two jailers, was a tall, graceful figure, of one fearfully emaciated, but who walked without sign of fear, while the fire that flashed from his sunken eyes spoke of undaunted resolution, and the peace written on every feature told of a strength which neither judge nor monarch could subdue.

The effect on John Lydar was electrical, while his wife started from his side, and the color came to her cheeks. The court was so taken by surprise, that no one spoke, and Walter continued—

"What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his soul?"

"My lord," said Lydar, turning to the judge, "I pray you let me have my word back again. I do confess before all men, it was through fear of punishment I yielded."

"Look well what thou dost, Master Lydar, and be not deceived; the penalty is hard to bear."

"I know it; nevertheless, I will bear it my lord. Give me back my word."

"Well," said the judge, "if thou be so earnest, thou shalt have thy word again, say what thou wilt."

While the judge was speaking, the Lord Mayor, the Recorder of the city, and the Bishop of London, were taking their places on the bench, in readiness for Walter's trial; and when Lydar had thus re-affirmed his faith, Walter stepped forward and laid his hand on Lydar's head.

"Hold, hold!" cried the Bishop of London; "look ye, my lord judge, he is reconciling a recusant in the open court."

"Separate the prisoners," said the judge—and his order was obeyed; but the deed was done—the words were spoken—and how calmly now did Lydar and his wife listen to their sentence, immediately after which they were removed from court, and Walter was placed at the bar.*

The names of the jury were then called over, in compliance

* See "Life of John Bush, Priest."

with the form of giving the accused the right to object to any of them; but every one knew that it was only a form, and that such a jury as would obey the judge would alone be chosen. When, however, Walter was called upon to make the usual answer, he said—and the court was again thrilled by the sound of that clear sweet voice—

"My lord I object to be tried by any but my peers; I claim the right of my rank as Baron de Lisle, and altogether plead against being tried in this court, or by such a jury."

"No," said the judge, "a bill of attainder hath been long since passed against you, and you can be tried by no other tribunal than this. Let the jury be sworn, and then let the bill of indictment be read."

In a few minutes the clerk commenced—

"The jury present, on the part of our sovereign lady the queen, that Walter de Lisle, born within the kingdom of England, and made and ordained priest by authority derived and pretended from the see of Rome, not holding the fear of God before his eyes, and slighting the laws and statutes of this realm of England, without any regard to the penalty therein contained, on the twenty-fourth day of May, in the thirty-fourth year of the reign of our lady the queen, at Paddington, in the county of Middlesex, traitorously, and as a false traitor to our said lady the queen, was and remained, contrary to the form of the statute in such case set forth and provided, and contrary to the peace of our said lady the queen, her crown and dignities."

"Answer, prisoner at the bar, whether guilty or not guilty, and hold up thy hand."

Walter attempted to obey, and to raise his right hand as he proclaimed his innocence; but his arms were so benumbed by the constant racking, that the effort was unavailing, and his hand would have fallen back had not Arthur Leslie, who was standing close beside the bar, leant over, and, taking the hand "so abused for the confession of Christ," reverently kissed it, and then raised his arm as high as possible.* "Not guilty," said Walter. "I protest before God and His holy angels, before heaven and earth, before the world and this bar whereat I stand, which is but a small resemblance of the terrible judgment of the next life, that I am not guilty of any act of any treason whatsoever."

"What!" said the Bishop of London, "wilt thou deny thou art a priest?"

"Oh, my lord," said Walter, looking at him, "surely it becomes not one, bound as you are to forward religion only, to interfere in a cause of life and death."

To this the bishop made no answer; but, turning to the judge, exclaimed, "A bag was found among the prisoner's effects; in it were a Roman breviary and a paper of faculties to hear confessions, and also to say Mass either above or below ground."

"Pray you, my lord," said Walter, "was my name mentioned in that paper you speak of; for if not, it surely is no argument against me?"

"That is nothing to the point," answered the bishop, hotly, "Say out at once, art thou a priest or no?"

"Suffer me, my lord," answered Walter, "to demand first one question of you: are you a priest?"

"No," said the bishop.

"No priest, no bishop," replied Father de Lisle.

"I am a priest," replied the bishop; "but not a massing priest."

"But," returned Walter, "if you are a priest, you are a sacrificing priest, for sacrificing is essential to priesthood; and if you are a sacrificing priest, you are a massing priest, for what other sacrifice have the priests of the new law, as distinct from mere laics, to offer to God, but that of the Eucharist, which we call the Mass? If, then, you are no massing priest, you are no sacrificing priest; if no sacrificing priest, no priest at all, and consequently no bishop."†

The bishop moved uneasily in his seat during this address,

* See "Life of Edmund Campian."

† See "Life of William Davies, Priest."

which was delivered with a sudden burst of eloquence that enforced silence.

"What dost thou mean by this prisoner?" said the judge: "art thou a priest of Rome, and thus a traitor?"

"I am," said Walter, "a Catholic priest, ordained by authority from the Pope, who alone has power to send forth priests; but I am no traitor. And according to this law, you would condemn Christ Himself, seeing He also was a priest, according to the order of Melchisedec."

"This fine language and pleading will avail thee nothing; you will not acknowledge the supremacy of the queen?"

"Not so, my lord," answered Walter; "I acknowledge Elizabeth my queen in all temporal matters, God be my witness; I have ever prayed for her, and would serve her to the best of my poor powers. I have never incited any one to rebellion against her, but have ever taught and maintained our duty to her as our sovereign."

"But," said the judge, "thou wilt not confess her to be the supreme governess of the Church of England?"

"No," answered Walter, "for it is contrary to Scripture that any woman can be the head of the Church, seeing that Christ Himself gave that dignity to St. Peter and his successors for ever."

"Tush, tush!" answered the judge; "this is folly. Wilt thou take the oath of supremacy or not?"

"No, my lord."

"Then thou must die."

"My lord, I am ready," said the prisoner; "for it is better to die with a good conscience for the faith of Christ, than to live in this miserable world having denied Him."

"Neither canst thou deny," said the judge, "having heard confessions of both men and women, having offered the damnable idolatry of the Mass, having blessed beads, and carried about *Agnus Dei* and crucifixes. Witnesses are here ready to prove it."

"Nay, my lord," said Walter, "let not men perjure themselves for the sake of shedding my blood. Well do I know that the witnesses waiting here can prove nothing against me; but beforehand I am ready to plead guilty to all of this. But again I say, in the name of all truth and justice, what *treason* is there in exercising the functions of my ministry, seeing that Christ Himself gave power to His priests to forgive sins, as we read in the Holy Gospels, and also to offer up the Mass—the unbloody sacrifice of His body and blood? And for the rest"—

"Enough, enough," said the judge; "no more of this blasphemous folly. Good master jurors, ye have heard this man condemned out of his own mouth. Ye well know the pestilent rebellions that are fostered by these men, who have presumed, against her majesty's express command, to be made priests beyond seas, and to return hither to this country and celebrate Masses, which are strictly prohibited, hindering likewise the people from going to church, and beguiling them with Popish fables. And ye, my good masters, what need that I speak further? Ye know your duty, as loyal and loving subjects of Elizabeth our queen (whom God preserve), is to bring in the prisoner guilty of the charges laid against him."

There was a short silence and one of the two ladies in the gallery almost gasped for breath as she bent over into the court below. The suspense was not long; the juries of free England in the days of "good Queen Bess" were too well trained to hesitate.

"My lord, we find the prisoner guilty."

Constance's eager look was directed to the bar; a smile of celestial joy shone on the face of the prisoner, and though Constance could not, Arthur Leslie heard him murmur, "Lord, I thank Thee."

The Recorder of London bent forward and said—"Prisoner, thou art a young man; have mercy on thyself, go to church, and thou shalt be pardoned."*

Walter turned round towards the crowded court. "Good people, I pray you to hearken; if I will go to church I shall

be free—how then can I die for *treason*? See ye well, I die for priesthood alone, and for doing that which our Lord Himself commanded, saying, 'Go, teach all nations.' I returned into this realm for no other purpose than to administer the Sacraments of Christ, and to reclaim to Him such of His sheep as, through ignorance or malice, had strayed from Him. And so it will continue; for this religion, being divine, can never fail, and if you condemn one and put another to death, others will be ready to preach to you the faith of Christ crucified."

"Silence the prisoner," said the judge in wrath. "Stand forth, Master de Lisle, for thou art an obstinate recusant, and listen to thy sentence."

Yes, listen to it, heir of the De Lisles; freeborn Englishman, listen to it:—

"Thou art guilty of death for the sole crime of exercising thy priestly office in this free land under this most just and gracious queen." "In three days from this thou shalt be carried on a hurdle to Tyborne, there hanged, and thy body disembowelled and quartered; and may God have mercy on thy soul! Amen."

A shudder ran through the court. Many men, as well as women, were in tears.

"Courage, my friend," whispered the ambassadress, as she held the half-fainting Constance in her arms; "my husband will intercede for him; one so noble shall not die thus; he will be saved." Alone in all that multitude there was one unmoved.

"Like a dog as they die at Tyborne, mother," said the boy baron a few years back, leaning on his mother's breast, and she shuddered.

"*Te Deum laudamus: te Dominum confitemur*,"* said the hunted priest in joyous accents; and perchance one voice in the heavenly choirs, as they saw the things of earth pass before their gaze, echoed more exultingly—"Tu, devicto mortis aculeo, aperuisti credentibus regna cælorum."†

Note.—The account of the trial is taken chiefly from those of Edmund Campian, William Scot, and Robert Southwell, priests.

CHAPTER XL.

"If the love of God is in your heart, you can easily understand that to suffer for God is an enjoyment to which all the pleasures of the world cannot even be compared. I assure you there are not in all Salamanca chairs or irons enough to prevent me from wishing for more for the love of Him in whose honor I wear this which appears to you too heavy.—ST. IGNATIUS LOYOLA

CONDEMNED to death! Oh, word of exceeding dread—word that the sick heart of the criminal can hardly realize, even while he shudders with horror! Death, not to the life almost ebbd out by sickness, but to those through whose veins the free blood courses, and who feel within them the vigor and energy of strength. In Walter's case, the strong constitution of the De Lisles had triumphed over the sufferings of prison, and health was fast returning. His hands were the greatest sufferers; the right wrist was totally dislocated, and he could only with great difficulty use the left. On his return to prison from court, he was placed in a larger and more commodious cell, in which there were a bedstead, table, and chairs, and writing materials were furnished to him by the jailer. One mark of severity was still retained, by replacing the irons on his legs,—they could not attempt to put them on the arms already so tortured.

"Nay, nay, my Arthur," exclaimed Walter, as the former entered the cell with a face expressive of deep affliction, "not thus must thou enter the 'bridegroom's chamber.' Bring to me no sad looks, no sighs and tears. Is it not what I have desired—was it not humbly hoping for this end that, by thy good aid, I landed on the Essex coast?"

"But for so short a time," answered Arthur, "for so few months,—if thou hadst labored for years;—but to be cut off in thy youth, ere men know what is in thee!"—

* We praise Thee, O God; we acknowledge Thee, O Lord.

† Thou, the sting of death being overcome, open to believers the kingdom of heaven.

* See "Life of William Harrington."

"God's time is the best, my friend," said Walter; "and surely it was not long that my dear father in Christ, Edmund Campian, was permitted to labor, and yet who left behind so bright a witness! Dear friend and father," continued Walter, looking up, "shall I soon see thee again, and thy face, on which Heaven shed its light even on earth, radiant in the vision of Jesus? Ah, Arthur, would thou couldst have seen *him*!"

"Yes, he must have been wonderful, when even the queen's curiosity was raised to do so."

"Was it? I never heard that."

"Oh yes," said Arthur. "From the Tower, when almost rent asunder with the racking, he was taken before her; she wanted to see the man, she said, who, having made Europe ring with his name, could spurn every hope of life to die a felon's death; and she looked on him and saw one who trembled not at her frown, nor fawned for her smile. Verily it must have been a new sight for her highness."

"May his prayers win for her light and repentance," said Walter. "Now, my Arthur, I must trust to thee to let the faithful know I am about to die, and entreat their prayers for me in my last conflict; and, Arthur, dost thou think it is possible to find a priest who in charity could come to me, now Father Paterson is in Bridewell? I think there must be another in London, since my imprisonment hath been known."

"I will try," answered Arthur. "If one can be found, I will convoy him hither."

"How much have I to thank thee for, my true friend!" said Walter. "My poor prayers for you *will* be heard at last, and a reward shall fall on you for your generous devotion."

Arthur did not reply, but going towards the bed on which Walter was lying, he knelt down by the side and hid his face in his hands.

"Is it so in very truth?" said Walter, in a tone thrilling with joy. "Wilt thou, indeed, choose Christ and His Cross for thy portion?"

"Yes, father," he answered, with tears, "the 'almost' is gone. I cast in my lot with Christ for aye. Hear my confession, father, and give me to drink of the waters of eternal life."

Towards evening in the same day, Walter lay down to sleep. During the day the cell had been thronged with visitors. The French ambassador came to express his deep sorrow that his intercession for the life of Father de Lisle had proved unavailing, and that it was evident Walter was the object of bitter hatred to some one at court. Many other Catholics came to make their confessions to Walter, and receive his last counsel and blessing; and none ever forgot those words of sweetness and strength. It was remarked afterwards, that none of those who had seen Walter in his last hours ever fell away from the faith.

While Walter slept, another stranger entered the cell; he trod softly, and going up to the bed, bent over the sleeper, and as he gazed, the tears gathered in his eyes. "Is it possible?" he whispered to himself—"Is this the boy I saw last at the wrestling-match in the college grounds at Rheims, when every eye was on him because of his manly beauty, and the wonderful strength he displayed, and which had been concealed in his slight, lithe form?"

Walter's lips moved, and he spoke in his dream, "Not as I, but as Thou;" and in another moment he awoke, and looked up in his visitor's face. Then came a wondering look of half recognition.

"Is it you, Basil?"

"Yes," answered his friend; "it is Basil Tavers."

Walter was silent for a minute from deep emotion.

"I fell asleep, praying that if it were His will, a priest might be sent to me, and in answer *you* come. Verily, my cup runneth over with consolation."

On the morning of the following day, Walter was again alone, when the door opened, and the jailer ushered in two ladies closely veiled.

They came forward, and kneeling, entreated the priest's blessing.

"I can hardly raise my hand to give it to you, my daughters,"

he answered, smiling, "but I will essay my best: 'The God of all might strengthen you, and give you courage to serve Him unto the end.'"

One of the visitors now threw back her veil, and Walter recognized Rose Ford.

"Ah, my child, come to bid me farewell. Nay, weep not, there is no cause for sorrow; rather thank God for me. Is your companion also known to me?"

"She desires to remain disguised," replied Rose; "and I hath r, come hither with a message from my mistress. She hath made great exertions to procure your pardon, but the difficulties have been many; at last, however, she has succeeded, and the queen pardons you."

A shade of deep disappointment passed over Walter's face, and he said in a low tone, as to himself, "I am not worthy; as Thou wilt in all things."

Then turning again to Rose, he said—

"Thank the duchess for me, Rose, for her charity. A pardon I did not expect nor desire. Nevertheless, a longer life will be an opportunity of serving God longer, and making myself more fit to see Him hereafter. Let her not deem me ungracious, Rose; but thou as a Catholic canst understand that to snatch water from the thirsty is less painful than to bid back to life's hard battle the soul that longed to be with God."

"But there are conditions to this pardon," said Rose.

"Ha! of what nature, I pray you?"

"You must give up exercising all priestly functions, and reside as a simple gentleman either here or abroad:—if *here*, concealing your faith as far as possible."

Walter's face was radiant again.

"Most happy conditions," he said, "since they permit me lawfully to refuse this pardon. And, my child, when you thank the duchess, as you must do for me, most gratefully, for her zeal in procuring that for me which I cannot accept, try and make her understand how low, how utterly worthless would be the life that is offered on such terms. Forswear my priesthood! forswear God's greatest, noblest, grandest gift to man! Does not the soldier die for his glory? Does not the king die for his crown? Does not even the merchant die for his gold? And why should *we* be backward, as soldiers of the Cross, the co-heirs of the kingdom, the stewards of the treasure house? Tell her, Rose, that the only wisdom is to love Christ, and the only folly to despise Him. Tell her that the longest life without a care, the fairest visions of youth perfectly fulfilled, is not to be compared for one moment to the joy of the prison and the rack, and the looking forward to Tyborne. I choose this last of my own free will, a thousand times; and she, when she comes to die, will feel, too, the truth of my words. Oh! that ere that day comes upon her, she may have learned to know the nothingness of earth, the greatness of eternity; and may have learned to dare all things to win Christ."

There was a short pause, and both his auditors were weeping.

"I have a favor to ask of the duchess, Rose; it is that she will do what she can to comfort and help, after my death, Lady Beauville. I hear her life has been spared, thanks to God; she is yet unconscious; but when she recovers she will need comfort. Ask your mistress to do what she can for her; and now I must bid you farewell, my children. Yet stay," and he took from his vest a small and well-worn rosary. "Carry this to the duchess as my last gift; it is the rosary of the Seven Dolors of Mary. It has its value, for it has longed to my dear mother, who often bathed it in tears; it hath been a consolation likewise to me. It may seem a strange present to the noble and prosperous lady; nevertheless, when dolor comes on her, as it does one day to all the children of earth, the thought of what the heart of Mary, pierced with that sharp sword, endured, may comfort her. God bless you, my children, and fill you with His benedictions. I beseech your charitable prayers for me."

Rose dropped her veil, and drawing the arm of her companion within her own, they passed from the cell through the long

CHAPTER XII.

passages into the free air. The lady clung to Rose's arm, and her frame trembled with convulsive sobs. When they reached home, O nstance (for it is easy to penetrate her disguise) went to her own room, and remained alone for many hours.

But Walter had yet one visitor to see: once again the door opened, and a woman entered; she was not veiled, but a large cloak and hood enveloped her tall, gaunt figure. Walter started as he beheld her; the face was so wan and haggard, and the large eyes glared wildly upon him. She stood still without speaking.

"What can I do for you, my daughter?" said the priest.

She came nearer. "I have come to see my victim, and to let you see your murderess."

Her eyes, fixed on Walter's face, beheld that not a muscle moved. He looked at her with the same compassionate glance.

"I am ignorant how thou hast wronged me; will you tell me, and are you a Catholic?"

"Once, once," she said, wildly. "Oh! talk not of that—of those days gone by, to the lost, the perishing!"

"Nay," said Walter, "tell me of them; it will ease thy aching heart, which is breaking 'neath the burden of memory."

"Thou didst dwell once secure in innocence and peace; then sin entered the paradise, and with it misery. See; have I not guessed rightly?"

She was crouching on the ground now, and weeping those agonizing tears which they only shed whose eyes have been dry for many years; and at last, in broken accents, the story came.

Young, lovely, but lowly born, Maud Felton had become one of the numerous victims of Lord Leicester's vice. Cast off for a newer toy, the favorite gave her over to the care of Eliot. She would have escaped from him, and soon ended her wretched existence, had not her child been born. Eliot, who desired to keep her as a slave, saw his advantage, used Leicester's name, and told her that in event of disobedience the child should be taken from her, and so she dragged on a life of misery. A ray of light had been shed on it by the visits and consolation of Rose Ford, who had accidentally found her out. We know the information that Eliot compelled her to procure from Rose; and the discovery of what she had done, and the falsity of Eliot's words, had driven her almost frantic.

All this was related to Walter, and she added, "You are already avenged, father. From the hour of your condemnation, my child sickened, and this morning she died."

"Then I shall see her ere you do," answered Walter, gently.

"Oh! my poor child, how is it that that deep mother's love of yours, which could not part with her on earth, can consent to part with her for aye?"

A groan of anguish burst from Maud.

"Why not turn now to God, and after leading a life of penance, rejoin your child in the light of God's kingdom? As for me, reproach not yourself so bitterly. You did not intend to work my death, and it was but a few days sooner. Eliot would speedily have tracked me; but if you think you have wronged me so much, grant me then a favor that shall cancel the debt."

"I will father," she said, looking up eagerly; "but what is it possible I can do?"

"Repent," said the priest, solemnly, "not with the wildness of despair, but with utter abasement of hope. Seek Rose Ford, tell her you have seen me; and I commend you to her care. She will hide you from Eliot, teach you the new path you are about to enter and bring you to a priest. Wilt promise me this my child?"

"Oh! call me not that, father," she said, shrinking back; "I—the outcast!"

"Nay," said Walter, "the Gospel tells us that 'when he was yet a great way off, his Father saw him, and had compassion on him.' Are we not the faint shadows only of His fatherly heart? Be of good cheer, my daughter, and give me thy promise;" and it was given, and Maud quitted the cell.

"Death, kind angel, watching by,
Gently closed his tranquil eye:
Whilst the free spirit wing'd her flight
From beam to beam of endless light."

"In thy bridal crown display'd
In thy wedding robe array'd
Of thy purple life-blood wove,
For the Blain One's feast of love."

LYRA CATHOLICA.

THE evening of the same day had come. Walter was lying down, and Arthur Leslie sat at the table engaged in writing letters from Walter's dictation. They were interrupted by the entrance of the jailer. "I bring thee bad news, Master de Lisle."

"Indeed!" answered Walter, with his usual smile; "let me hear thee, friend."

"Thou art to die to-morrow."

"Impossible!" cried Arthur, starting up; "the sentence said three days, and lo! to-morrow is the second."

"'Tis no fault of mine," returned the man; "but express orders have come that the execution take place to-morrow."

"'Tis well!" said Walter. "Arthur, hold thy peace for an instant. My friend," said he to the jailer, "thou hast brought me the joyfullest tidings that ever I heard! At what hour, I pray thee, must I be ready?"

"Thou art to leave this at eight o'clock; and for to-night, sir, whatever indulgence thou dost crave thou shalt have. Most prisoners like to feast the night before they are executed, and to take leave merrily of earth. Wouldst like a flask of wine for thy supper?"

"No, friend," said Walter; "I am going to my feasting, not to leave it."

"I trust me, good master," returned the jailer, "thou wilt not forget my poor services; I have been as lenient as mine office permits."

"Thou hast," said Walter; "be sure I will not forget thee, and, ere, I die, will give thee the best reward I can."

The jailer left the cell; and as he went along the passage he muttered to himself,—"They are a strange set. How he rejoices to die! Hark, how those wretches who are to die with him howl and rage! Alack, 'now from the saint I must go to the devils.'"

"Dear Arthur," said Walter to his friend, "I desire to pass the night in prayer and vigil; wilt thou ask Father Travers to come to me, if possible, at sunrise to-morrow?"

"Yes, father," said Arthur; "but I know now why this new order hath come. The queen takes boat to-morrow from Westminster to Greenwich, and it is designed to draw off the people's attention from Tyborne. I will hasten, however, to let all I can know of the trick."

"Ah, Arthur," said Walter, laying his hand caressingly upon him, "didst thou but know the joy this news gives me, thou wouldst not be so angry with Walsingham."

But as the night passed on, the calm and happiness that surrounded Walter departed, and as great heaviness and agony overshadowed him: it was often thus with the martyrs, the more to liken them to their Lord. Into such an agony we cannot enter, or attempt to sound its mysterious depths. The early dawn brought with it a comforter, better than an Angel. Basil Travers said Mass in Walter's cell, and Arthur served; and thus Walter received his *viaticum*. From that moment peace returned, and, happy as he had always been until the night before, he seemed now filled with a celestial joy.

"Arthur," he said, "thou must be my groom to-day, and tire me bravely, seeing my poor hands cannot help themselves. Let me be well apparelled for my bridal day."

At length eight o'clock arrived, and the jailer came for Walter. The prisoner rose with alacrity, his irons were knocked off, and giving the jailer some gold pieces, he passed, accompanied by Basil and Arthur, into the outer court of the prison. The hurdle was ready, and a companion was waiting for Wal-

ter. He was one of a gang of notorious highwaymen, wild and ferocious-looking, with an aspect of sullen despair; it was with some difficulty he was bound down with ropes to the hurdle; and then came Walter's turn. He came forward, and making the holy sign, knelt for a moment in prayer, and then, without waiting to be forced, or even helped into it, he leapt into the straw, and "composed himself upon it as if he had been riding in triumph." Many Catholics had gained admission to the prison, and were weeping bitterly. "Why weep ye for me," said Walter, "who am glad at heart of this happy day?"

"Well," said one jailer to another, as the hurdle moved from the prison, "assuredly this man dies for a good cause!"

Walter was bound to the hurdle by cords passed over his legs only, on account of the already crippled condition of his hands. The prison-gates were opened, and the hurdle, closely guarded by pursuivants, made its way into the midst of a vast multitude. Walter raised himself, and blessing the people, exclaimed, "God save you all; God bless you, and make you all good Catholics!"†

The great multitude swayed to and fro, as the guards beat a passage with their staves, crying "Back, in the queen's name." As the procession went on, the crowd grew less dense than immediately outside the prison. The windows of the houses on each side were thrown open, and their inhabitants were standing there, some weeping, most gazing with wondering curiosity. At the open window of one large house were collected a remarkable group. The French ambassador was kneeling forward, near him knelt also his wife, and between her and Rose Ford knelt the duchess of Bertram, holding in her arms her youngest child, while her eldest was by her side.

No word passed between them and Walter. Reverently they all bowed their heads while the mangled hand of the martyr was raised in benediction.

The first feeling of the idle mob had been rather one of compassion for the victims; but as this wore off, the spirit of mischief came into play, and some amused themselves by throwing stones and mud at the hurdle. It roused Walter's companion, who had hitherto lain still, to utter a volley of fearful oaths and curses, and to attempt to defend himself. This, from having both hands and feet bound, was impossible, and his angry and unavailing withings diverted the mob so much, that they redoubled their annoyance. A shower of mud covered Walter and his companion, and one ruffian in the crowd, getting near the hurdle, spat into Walter's face, exclaiming, as he did it, "There's holy water for ye." The man by Walter's side was so excited by this, that, making a tremendous effort, he broke the cord that bound his arms, and turned towards Walter to wipe off the insult. Walter cast on him his glance of sweet serenity—

"Thank ye, my friend, for this kindly office; I need but few more now."

"'Tis a shame to treat thee so," muttered the man; "thou hast done no crime, save refusing to chop and change thy religion at the queen's will. I like thy courage, for my part. Well, good father, it is soon over for both of us now, and then we go—thou to heaven, I to hell."

Walter, who had been looking earnestly at him said—

"What is thy name, friend?"

"Ralph Woodbine," answered the man roughly.

"Art thou a Catholic?"

"I have served no God save the devil all my life. My mother was a Catholic, and my father too, for that matter, in Queen Mary's time; but he changed when Queen Bess came to the crown, and my mother broke her heart and died, because he would bring me up in his fashion."

"And what did he teach thee?"

"Why, nothing. Marry, then, what had he to teach? The God he served was to keep his place as steward in the royal buttery, and get rich, and leave his riches to me; and he has lived to see me *here*;" and Ralph laughed hoarsely.

"Ralph," answered Walter, "we are going together to death, let us go together to heaven."

"Alas! good master, art thou distraught? Did I not tell thee I have served the devil well, and am to be hung for my crimes, as I deserve?"

"You have served Satan in life," said Walter, "and it suffices; serve him not in death. Thou hast not forgotten thy mother, and thy childhood, when thou knelt by her side, and heard the holy mass. She is dead long since, you say, and is with God; I too had a mother who died praying for me; perchance from that sky above us they, with God's chosen ones, are leaning to see us die! Oh, how mightily they pray for us!" and as he spoke he raised his eyes with a look of such rapt faith and devotion, that one might almost dream, like St. Stephen, he saw heaven open. "And another mother prays for you Ralph," he continued; "*Sancta Maria Mater Dei, ora pro nobis peccatoribus, nunc et in hora mortis nostræ.*"

The words struck on Ralph's ear with a strange appealing sound. The tears were falling down his rough hard face. "Alas, father, I am too great a sinner; there is no repentance for me, a wretch, a villain! No, no; hell gapes for me! I saw it last night in my sleep, and for the first time in my life I knew what fear was; but there is no hope for me."

"Thou art not a greater sinner," the priest replied, "than he who hung on the cross by the side of JESUS, or she that washed His feet; thou canst recollect the time when, at thy mother's knees, thou heardest the tale of mercy! He has said, 'If thy sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow.' Ralph thou believest in God, in Christ the Saviour, and that in His Church He hath left pardon for sins?"

"I believe," sobbed Ralph; the hard heart was broken in the anguish of that hour, and on that rude death-bed the work of reconciliation went on. The mob pelt them still, and jeer them, as they pass. The hurdle shakes and jolts along the rough road, and up the long Holborn Hill, but they heed not the one, feel not the other—that sinner who sobs out his sins and his repentance; that priest who, for the last time on earth, absolves his Master's sheep. Soon, very soon, he must stand before that Master to render his account, and he is winning one more soul to lay before those feet.

And now they have reached the top of the hill, and the houses, which have been getting gradually few and straggling, have ceased altogether, and they have reached the Hospital of St. Giles in the Fields, and there, according to an old custom, a cup of wine or ale was offered to the prisoners, "their last refreshment in this life!" Then, for the first time, did Walter betray some emotion. He gazed on the full cup of good red wine, and the tears came into his eyes, and he refused to drink. Ralph, parched with thirst, drank eagerly, and then urged Walter to do the same, but he would not, and Arthur Lisle knew that his thoughts were of the "gall and vinegar" of his Lord's last cup on earth. A crowd having collected at this place of stoppage, Walter began to speak to them. "Good people, ye know for what cause I am about to die;" but he was rudely checked by the guards, and the hurdle again put in motion.

There will not be any more houses till they reach the little village of Tyborne. It was a lovely day, one of those cloudless days in summer, when hardly a fleecy cloud can be seen in the clear intensely blue sky. The birds carolled gaily past, unmindful and unknowing of cruelty and wrong on earth, and in the fields the little flowers, England's own meadow flowers, rejoiced in their beauty, and sent up their worship to their Creator. And so the long procession reached Tyborne.

It was a sight, in very truth; the fields immediately surrounding the place of execution were filled with people; it was one dense mass of heads. Nearer the gallows and scaffold, which were on the edge of the road, were numerous coaches and horsemen. It was roughly computed, afterwards, that of these there were from six to seven hundred, and the crowd of people on foot about twenty thousand. However many people had gone to see the queen step into her royal barge, there were enough left to be a more numerous body of witnesses

* "Life of John Ducket, Priest.

† Edmund Campian.

* Stowe.

than Elizabeth would have desired. Among the horsemen, there was one mounted on a dark gray horse, who was determined in his efforts to place himself in good sight of the gallows, and by great perseverance, and many winning words, he succeeded in his purpose. Arthur Leslie, on foot, was close beside the scaffold, he had struggled through the crowd with the strength love ever gives to be near the loved and suffering. The tall gallows rose grim and dark before the spectator's eyes, but loving hands had endeavored to rob it of some of its horrors, for it was twined with wreaths of green and summer flowers, and the ground directly around was strewn with green leaves and sweet-smelling herbs. The affectionate hearts who had prepared these tokens were rewarded when they heard of the smile of pleasure which lit up the martyr's face as he perceived them. Close to the gallows stood the scaffold, raised some feet above the ground, and formed of rough planks. The hangman's two assistants were there, holding in their hands the cords for binding the victims, and the long knives for the inhuman butchery which was to ensue. The hangman himself was busy at the gallows. On one side of the scaffold was the sheriff of the county and some of his officers, together with three or four Protestant ministers, who had come thither with the hope of winning a recantation from Walter, or of preventing any dying words of his having weight with the people. The hurdle stopped: the prisoners were released and led to the scaffold. There was a great hum among the crowd when Walter made his appearance. Despite all he had gone through, there was a majesty and a patrician grace about his tall and noble figure, and though torture and suffering had done their work, they lingered much of that manly beauty which had gladdened his mother's eye long years before.

"Let the highwayman be put to death first," said the sheriff; "and perchance, sir, thou, by this grievous sight, may be led to crave the queen's grace even now."

"Farewell, then, my son," said Walter, turning to Ralph; and he would have embraced him had not the latter fallen at his feet, and kissed them with many tears.

And now Walter was compelled to witness the horrible spectacle of Ralph's death.

"Make him look at it all," whispered one of the ministers to the sheriff.

No need of such counsel. The priest knew his duty too well, and faltered not; he held up the crucifix before Ralph's eyes, and bade him call on his Lord for patience. The agony was fearful, and shrieks and cries burst from the dying sufferer. Walter prayed earnestly for Ralph and for himself: "Lord, give us grace to endure unto the end."

At length one frightful cry, and then it ended. Upon the poor, panting, bleeding corpse earth could do no more.

"Now, Master de Lisle," said the sheriff, "'tis thy turn; unless, indeed, thou wilt repent and go to church."

"Nay," said Walter, "better a thousand deaths than deny Christ. I desire of your favor but a short space to speak to the people."

"No, no," cried the ministers with one voice; "let him not pervert the people."

The sheriff was quite willing to forbid it; but the people were determined to hear the speech,—and the will of a great mob is generally omnipotent,—and so Walter stepped forward and began his address;—

"Good people and dear countrymen, harken unto me. My religion is the Roman Catholic; in it I now die, and so fixedly die, that if all the good things in this world were offered me to renounce it, all should not remove one hair's breadth from my Roman Catholic faith. A Roman Catholic I am; a Roman Catholic priest I am; a Roman Catholic priest of that religious order called the Society of JESUS I am; and I bless God who first called me, and I bless the hour in which I was first called to these functions. Many that are here present heard my trial, and can testify that nothing was laid to my charge but priesthood: if to be a Catholic priest is to be a traitor, then indeed I am one! this is the cause for which

through the whole world, taught through all ages, from Christ's time, and will be taught for all ages to come. For this cause I most willingly sacrifice my life, and I look upon it as my greatest happiness that my most good God has chosen me (most unworthy) to this blessed lot, the lot of the saints; I have deserved a worse death: for though I have been a faithful and true subject to my queen, I have been a grievous sinner against God. Thieves and robbers that rob on highways would have served God in a greater perfection than I have done, had they received so many favors and graces from Him as I have. But as there was never sinner who truly repented and called to JESUS for mercy, to whom He did not show mercy, so I hope, by the merits of His passion, He will have mercy on me, who am heartily sorry that I ever offended Him. Whomsoever, present or absent, I have ever offended, I humbly desire them to forgive me; as for my enemies, I freely forgive them all, and singularly, and especially all who have thirsted after my blood. I wish their souls so well that, were it in my power, I would seat them seraphim in heaven. And I beg of the goodness of my God, with all the fervor I am able, and most humbly entreat Him that He would drive from you that are Protestants the darkness of error, and enlighten your minds with the rays of truth; and you who are Catholics I say, fear God, honor your queen, be firm in your faith; avoid mortal sin by frequenting the sacraments of Holy Church; patiently bear your afflictions and persecutions; forgive your enemies. Your sufferings are great; I say be firm in your faith to the end, yea, even to death; then shall you heap unto yourselves celestial treasures in the heavenly Jerusalem, where no robber robbeth, no moth eateth, and no rust consumeth. Bear me witness, all my hearers, that I profess all the articles of the Roman Catholic faith in that Church, one, holy, catholic, and apostolic; that Church which is to continue to the consummation of the world. Whatever that Church of God hath by revelation from Him, whatever that Church hath taught me and commanded me to believe, I believe it to an *iota*. And as to what is said of Catholics having dispensations for lying, perjury, killing kings, and other the most enormous crimes, I declare it a most wicked and malicious calumny cast upon us.*"

"Cease, cease, Master de Lisle," said the sheriff, "time presses, and it is enough; prepare to die."

Walter turned from the edge of the scaffold, and was about to pray. One of the ministers came forward—

"Good brother repent thee of thy errors, and let me pray with thee for mercy on thy misguided soul."

Walter looked at him, saying gently—

"My friend, you and I are not one in religion, wherefore I pray you content yourself. I bar none of prayer, only I desire them of the household of faith to pray with me, and in my agony to say one creed."†

"Then," replied the minister, rudely, "if thou prayest at all, pray in English, and not in an unknown tongue."

"I will pray," replied Walter, gently, "in a language I well understand."

"Misguided man," said another minister, "we bid thee pray as Christ taught."

An involuntary smile passed over Walter's face."

"What! do you think Christ taught in English?"

"Pray for the queen," said the sheriff, sternly.

"I have and do," said Walter.

"But do you pray for *Elizabeth*, the queen?" said the sheriff.

"Yea," answered Walter, "for Elizabeth, your queen and my queen. I now at this instant pray my Lord God to make her His servant in this life, and after this life co-heir with Jesus Christ."

And then there was silence, such a silence as there could be amidst an eager multitude; and the executioners adjusted the rope, and sharpened their knives; and Walter prayed with closed eyes, and hands crossed on his breast. He opened his eyes at length, and earnestly looked among the crowd, till they

rested on the rider of the dark-gray horse; then he bowed his head down low, and at the same moment the rider raised his hand, and the last absolution fell on the soul of the martyr.

The hangman now came up, and, kneeling down, implored pardon for the deed he was about to end.

"Most willingly do I forgive thee," said Walter, giving him some pieces of gold he had brought with him for the purpose.

The man began to take off the upper garments of the priest; and while he did so, Walter cast one glance round on the world he was about to leave. On one hand stretched the large forest of St. John, which covered the country in the direction of Edgeware, and its tall trees waved proudly in the summer light. Towards Paddington the country was more bare, and like a little distant speck was that farmhouse where Walter said his last Mass.* On the other side, the smooth, green meadows sloped down towards the river, and far off were seen the oxen quietly grazing. Farther in the distance the silver Thames rippled in the sunlight, and the glorious Abbey of Westminster stood out clearly in its beauty. One glance around, and one other into the clear blue sky, and then the hangman came near to put the rope round the priest's neck; and Walter took hold of it and kissed it, and then put it on his shoulders, saying, "Behold the last stole of my priesthood." He closed his eyes, and clasping his hands, he said, "*In manus tuas Domine commendo spiritum meum.*" The rope was drawn tight, and the plank on which he stood withdrawn from under his feet; but the very next instant the sheriff gave a sign, and though the people cried eagerly, "Hold, hold," the rope was cut, and Walter dropped on the scaffold, insensible, but not dead. Hastily they stripped him, and then began that scene of butchery which would have disgraced a heathen nation, and which we shrink from describing; nevertheless, as was beautifully said in speaking of the sufferings of martyrs in the olden times, "what *they endured, we may bear to hear of.*" The design was to cut open the body till they found the heart. They literally began to cut him in pieces. Groans and sobs were heard on all sides, and many tears were shed, and some of the senseless rabble yelled and howled like brute beasts. The executioners growing timid, did their work badly, and cut and stabbed, scarce knowing what they were about. The first incision of the knives had woken Walter to full consciousness; the executioners flew upon him to bind him down. There was no need, he lay perfectly still; the sweat gathered in heavy drops upon his brow; and as the agony increased, from his mouth, eyes, and nose ran down blood and water;† but there was neither groan nor cry from those lips. They spoke, indeed, but it was one word only, "JESU, JESU, be to me a JESU!" The work was accomplished, and the quivering heart was torn from its place and held before the fast glazing eyes, and then placed on a spear and shown to the howling multitude. "O JESU, JESU," said the martyr once again, "I come to Thee, O sweet JESU!" and with these words the spirit was set free.

Then the head of the martyr was struck from his body, and in doing so the clumsy hangman let his axe first fall on the arm, and severed from it the right hand; it rolled over the scaffold, and was instantly perceived by Arthur Leslie, who contrived to take it up and conceal it.‡ But the body of Walter was not, as usual with others, quartered and placed on London Bridge—Lord Beauville had no wish to be thus reminded of his kinsman—and so the remains were hastily thrown into a cart, and interred within the precincts of Newgate, as they would have buried a dog, without chant or prayer. So they deemed; but perchance their ears were too dull to hear sweet alleluias, and their eyes too blind to see angelic forms lay him softly in his grave, and kiss those limbs twice consecrated, once with the unction of the priesthood, and again with the martyr's blood. He sleeps there, the last of his line—not as his fathers do, 'neath sculptured altar tombs, with their deeds inscribed

in marble—it matters not; for them they sang the Mass and chanted the Requiem, and gave abundant alms that the soul might rest in peace. No need of these for him. The white robes gleam in heaven with radiant brightness, for another is among their throng, and the martyrs wave their palms triumphantly, for another mortal hand grasps his and is crowned with them.

Hush, ye mourners by the scaffold of Tyborne, weep not so bitterly; the blood is dripping truly, and the green earth of England sucks it in; but look up, ye that weep for your father, look up and listen, there is "a sound of harpers harping with their harps."

Note.—"He reconciled, in the very act, one of the malefactors that were executed with him."—*Life of Father Heath, O. S. F.*

"When they arrived at Tyborne, they found the gibbet beautifully adorned with garlands and wreaths of flowers, and the ground all covered with odoriferous herbs and greens."—*Life of Thomas Maxwell, Priest.*

The instances of the martyrs surviving and speaking, after the heart had been extracted, are numerous.

CHAPTER XIII.

"Then, with slow reverent step
And beating heart,
From out thy joyous days
Thou must depart.

"And, leaving all behind,
Come forth alone,
To join the chosen band
Around the throne "

ADELAIDE PROCTOR.

It was over, and the pent-up hearts of the mourners had leisure to pour forth their griefs; but their sorrow had a soothing character: the loss to them was bitter, but the gain to him how great! When they recalled to mind each step of his weary pilgrimage, and then considered the end was reached—the victory won—they could not but rejoice, and turned away from Tyborne resolved to suffer manfully and follow in the way he had gone. To Arthur Leslie fell the task of delivering the letters that Walter had written from prison; and most of them had, indeed been written by Arthur himself, at Walter's dictation, but the trembling signature of the tortured hand of the martyr was there to enhance their value in the eyes of the recipients. These letters were three in number: one to Father Mordaunt, another to Sir Robert, and the third to Blanche and Mary. The one addressed to Sir Robert Thoresby was as follows:

"MY DEAREST UNCLE:—

"After many conflicts, mixed with spiritual consolations and Christian comforts, it hath pleased God, of His infinite mercy, to call me out of this vale of misery. To Him, therefore, for all His benefits, at all times and for ever, be all praise and glory. The tender care you have had for me, I trust, in heaven shall be rewarded. I am advertised that I am to end the course of this life; God grant I may do it in imitation of the servants of God, and may say joyfully with St. Andrew, rising from the hurdle, *Salve sancta cruz.* Innocency is my only comfort against all the forged villany which is fathered on my fellow priests and me. Well, when try the high Judge, God Himself, this false vizard of treason shall be removed from Catholic men's faces, then shall it appear who they be that carry a well-meaning, and who an evil, murdering mind; in the mean season, God forgive all injustice; and if it be His blessed will to convert our persecutors, that they may become professors of His truth. Prayers for my soul procure for me, my loving kinsman; and so having great need to prepare myself for God, never greater in mind, nor less troubled towards God, binding up all my iniquities in His precious wounds I bid you farewell; yea, and once again, the lovingest uncle that ever kinsman had in this world, farewell.

"God grant us both His grace and blessing to the end, that

* It is a fact that at a later period, in a lonely farmhouse at Paddington, Mass was said in secret: we have ventured to suppose it existed at the time of our tale.

† *Life of Hugh Green, Priest.*

‡ The hand of Father Arrowsmith has been carefully preserved until the present day.

living in His fear, and dying in His favor, we may enjoy one the other forever. Your good Nephew,

"WALTER DE LISLE, Priest."

To Father Mordaunt he wrote :—

"MOST REVEREND AND MOST DEAR FATHER,—

"As in duty I am bound never to forget you, who have ever had so tender and fatherly care of me, so now, especially, I must in no ways omit to write to you, being the last time I must salute you; for, unworthy though I be, I am to end my days in the just quarrel of my Lord and Master, Christ JESU.

"Alas, Father! what other thing can I desire than to suffer with Christ, to be reproached with Christ; to be crucified with Christ, to die a thousand deaths that I may live for ever with Christ? for if it be the glory of a soldier to be made like his lord, God forbid I should glory in anything but the cross of my crucified Lord. My greatest desire is to suffer; and I would I had as many lives to offer as I have committed sins. Dear father, prepare yourself always to suffer, and animate your spiritual children. God give me strength and courage, and make me glorify his glorious name by my death. Let me, therefore, dear father, be made partaker of your good prayers; and say, I beseech you, and procure others to say, some masses for my sinful soul. Commend me to all our most dear fathers and brothers of the Society of Christ my JESUS, in whose prayers, labors, and sacrifices as I have a share, so have I a great confidence. I have comfort in Christ JESU and his Blessed Mother, my good Angel, and all the Blessed Saints; and I have much comfort in the valiant and triumphant martyrs that are gone before me, and I do trust much in their good prayers.

"Once again, adieu! I take my last leave of you, and commit you to Christ JESU.

"Your poor debtor and Son,

WALTER DE LISLE, Priest."

The last was addressed to Blanche and to Mary :—

"MOST DEAR AND LOVING CHILDREN IN OUR LORD,—

"Be of good courage; hereafter at the pleasure of God, we shall meet in heaven: do not then weep, do not lament, do not take heavily my honorable death. Know you not that we are born once to die, and that always in this life we may not live?—know you not how vain, how wicked, how inconstant, how miserable this life of ours is?—do you not consider my calling, my estate, my profession?—do not you remember that I am going to a place of all felicity and pleasure? Why, then, should you weep, or mourn, or cry out? But, perhaps you will say, 'We weep not so much for your death as we do for that you are hanged, drawn and quartered.' Dear children, it is the favorable, honorablest and happiest death that ever could have chanced unto me. I die not for knavery, but for verity; I die not for treason, but for religion; I die not for any ill-demeanor or offence committed, but only for my faith, for my conscience, for my priesthood, for my blessed Saviour, Jesus Christ. We are not made to eat, drink, sleep, to go bravely, to feed daintily, to live in this wretched vale continually; but to serve God, to please God, to fear God, and to keep His commandments, which, when we cannot be suffered to do, then rather must we choose to lose our lives than to desire our lives. Be of good cheer, then, my most loving children, and cease from weeping; for would you not be glad to see me a bishop, a king, or an emperor? How glad, then, may you be to see me a martyr, a saint, a most glorious and bright star in heaven! My sins are great, I confess, but I flee to God's mercy; my negligences are without number, I grant, but I appeal to my Redeemer's clemency; I have no boldness but in His blood, His bitter passion is my only consolation. It is comfortable that the prophet has recorded that '*He hath written us in His hands.*' Oh, that He would vouchsafe to write Hims in our hearts. All that dulle me has been delay

of my death; it was not without cause that our Master said Himself, '*Quod facis fac cito*;' for I had hoped ere this, casting off the bod of this death, to have kissed the precious glorified wounds of my sweet Saviour, sitting on the throne of His Father's own glory. Commend me to all my spiritual children, wheresoever they are now sorrowing; remind them that the joy of this life is nothing, and the joy of the after-life is everlasting. It is said on Friday next I shall be possible; God grant me humility, that, following His footsteps, I may obtain the victory. God comfort you, my children; Jesus save your souls, and send you to His glory.

Farewell, farewell, ten thousand times!

Your loving father in the Lord,

WALTER DE LISLE, Priest."

There was indeed, a fourth letter, written altogether by Walter himself, at many intervals, and at the cost of much agony. No eye save his own saw its contents; he sealed it and addressed it to the Countess of Beauville. But Isabel was unable to read the letter of her dead brother. Her life had for weeks hung on a thread, but on the day of Walter's condemnation the fever abated; then followed a fearful exhaustion, and at length, gradually, strength seemed to return. For weeks she had never spoken, save in ravings, and her state had alternated between delirium and stupor. Now Rachel, and Rose, and Constance, who watched by her, waited anxiously for the moment when strength should bring consciousness, and consciousness memory, and the hideous past should gleam before her eyes. But Isabel woke again to life, but not to reason. When she spoke, it was to talk of the days of her childhood, and she became amused at each passing trifle, as an infant, the past was one great oblivion—the physician gave it as his opinion that reason would return, if ever, only shortly before her death, and that she would probably recover much of her strength, and might live for years. This latter point decided, Constance hesitated no longer to take a step which was truly a taking up of her cross and confessing Christ. In the chapel of the French embassy, with no witness save her loving Rose, Constance was received into the One Church. On her return home, she told her husband. For a long time simple and unfeigned astonishment so filled the duke's mind that he could not entertain any other idea. That Constance, his young and lovely wife, surrounded by all that could make life pleasant, should deliberately throw away all for religion's sake, was to him simply incomprehensible. If she had been brought up a Catholic and kept to her faith, though that for his part he could not understand, still it would be more reasonable; but to adopt it, save only when it was the sovereign's creed, and so a way to advancement, was incredible. He tried all his arguments, and Constance answered them in the same strain as St. Philip Neri's *What then?* and each answer puzzled the duke more and more; and at last, weeping like a child, he reminded his wife that he had no power to shield her from the queen's sentence, whatever it might be. Constance knew it well, and she knew too, as every Englishwoman did, that her beauty, and fidelity to her husband, and her freedom from the least taint of scandal, were not likely to advantage her in Elizabeth's eyes. The royal sentence on the duchess was banishment from her husband's house, to retire on a small allowance (the amount of which Elizabeth herself would fix), and never on any account again to see her children. They should run no chance of being taught their mother's religion, and the queen appointed the Lady Fortescue, an elderly kinswoman of the Bertram family, and a bigoted Protestant, to bring up the children. In three days Constance must part with them. Alas! how the hours fled, counted by the mother's aching heart; how fondly she watched over them, and how she strove gently to prepare them for a separation from her.

"But if we go away, you will soon come, mother?" said Lady Mary; and Constance said, "she hoped so."

Alas! what death-like hopes.

"I will teach thee one prayer, my little Mary," said Con-

stance, fondly, "which thou shalt say each night; and when Harry grows older, thou shalt teach him too, but not till he is old enough to know that it is a secret—mother's secret, which you must tell no one."

And Mary, with a look of great importance, promised; and she repeated after her mother the words of the "Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, JESUS. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen."

A shadow of awe gathered on her childish face. "I will never forget it, mother, and say it every night when I think of you, before I go to sleep."

The day of parting came at last, and Lady Fortescue, stern, cold, and harsh, arrived to receive the children; and when Constance, with bursting heart, would have given her some of the counsels respecting them, which a mother's heart alone can give, she was repulsed by—

"Pardon me, your Grace, the mother who can forsake her children, is one who can meet with no sympathy from me."

And Constance turned away to hold her children for the last time in her arms. Her little lovely Mary, just six years old, and her noble boy of three, with his large, starlike eyes, and his playful ways, and a wisdom beyond his years—they cling to her neck and cover her with kisses, and cry and sob with all their childish misery at parting; but she knows well this will pass, and they will be taught to forget and despise the mother who loves them so wildly. She knows it, and she bears it all, and her heart is rent and broken within her. It is her torture-chamber and her racking. And now the desolate future lay before Constance; and in the midst of her agony, as before in her joys, she was thoughtful for others. She saw that Rachel's strength was rapidly giving way from the great strain on body and mind, attendant on Isabel's long illness, and her present trying state; and Constance knew that Rachel's prayer was that she might live to see Isabel recover even an hour's consciousness, and be reconciled to her God. Constance thought also of Rose and her future; for Rose's parents were dead, and her brothers scattered.

The duchess proposed to her brother that he should commit to her the care of his afflicted wife, and that they should together seek a refuge in France or Belgium. They would there be free from molestation, and the entire change of air and scene might possibly tend to restore Isabel's mind. The earl gladly consented. His wish now was to obtain a divorce, and by a second marriage perpetuate his family, and in his burning indignation against his sister, he desired to persuade the Duke of Bertram to follow his example. But this the duke, sorely afflicted, refused to do. Nothing could, however, suit the earl's plans better than the exile of Constance and Isabel, and he facilitated their speedy departure. They left London in the direction of Apswell, but turning sharply away when within a few miles of that place, they travelled the same road which, eleven years before, Walter de Lisle had passed in his hasty flight. A small vessel was in waiting, and the party embarked. Isabel was laid on cushions on the deck, and she laughed with childish glee at the foaming waves and the ropes and sails, while Rachel sat beside her, with tears rolling down her face. The proud Isabel, with her haughty intellect and her indomitable will, and this was the end! Rose, too, sat still and wept, and by her side sat a tall thin woman, on whose pale cheeks there burned one spot of red, and whose sunken eyes were glassy and bright, and who looked on the receding shore with no glance of sorrow or regret. The tears, indeed, rolled down her cheeks, but they came from a sorrow within—it was easy to see they were the constant tears of a penitent. There were no tears on Constance's face. She stood gazing at the white cliffs of England, until they grew dim in the distance. From the land where her children dwelt she raised her eyes to the clear sky above, and as she thought of the Love to which even a mother's is as a vain shadow, her bruised heart was still.

CHAPTER XIV.

"Now the heavy day is done,
Home awaits thee, wearied one."

FELICIA HEMANS.

"I am footsore and very weary,
But I travel to meet a friend:
The way is long and dreary,
But I know that it soon must end.

"Like a dream, all my toil will vanish,
When I lay my head on his breast;
But the journey is very weary,
And he only can give me rest!"

ADELAIDE PROCTOR.

MANY years have passed away, and we may cast one glance round upon the different characters in whose joys and sorrows we have taken some interest, and linger for a moment longer upon spots which have been associated with those events.

To an old, quaint town in Belgium, we must bend our steps. Threading our way along the narrow streets where the houses almost meet overhead, we come at last to a curious pile of buildings—a long low house on each side, and an old Gothic church in the middle. It is the Convent and Hospital of the Dames of St. Augustine, who break their cloister only to attend upon the sick and dying. The church is open to all comers, so we will open the door and walk in. It is a beautiful church, and from the glare of the summer's day there is coolness and refreshment in the shade of those long aisles and shadowy roof, and the sunlight falls through the stained glass in gorgeous hues upon the stone floor. In the portion set apart for the religious several nuns are kneeling in prayer. They wear the habit and scapular of white serge, the leathern belt, and straight black veil, which mark the daughters of St. Austin.

In the outer part of the chapel there hangs upon the wall a large and celebrated painting; it is of the "Mater Dolorosa." Before the picture is kneeling a lady dressed in black, and those who are in the habit of frequenting the church bear witness how constantly through the day that same slight figure is seen kneeling there, and those eyes, which are so often swollen with weeping, gaze long and lovingly on the face of Her who cried, "Is there any sorrow like unto my sorrow?" And those who knew Constance said afterwards that she told them she could think only of one of those seven sorrows which grieved the heart of Mary, and it was the three days' loss, when His mother "sought Him sorrowing." But on this day, while Constance knelt absorbed in prayer, a side door opened, and a nun entered, and beneath the habit of the Religious might be recognized the sweet features of Rose Ford. She bent for a few moments in earnest prayer; then approaching Constance, beckoned her from the church. When they were outside, she said, "There is a change;" and without another word they hastened to a large room in the hospital, in which Isabel was lying. For ten years had she lingered in darkness of mind, and, until the last few weeks, in the same state in which she had left England. She had not even missed Rachel, who, a few months after their arrival, died, literally of exhaustion and sorrow, blessing God that He had brought her to die within the shadow of His house, and with the strength of His sacraments, and praying with her last breath for the child of her love and devotion.

Beside Rachel's grave there was another, unmarked, save by a little cross; and the good nuns of the convent often prayed beside it, and mingled tears with their prayers, for they said that though she who rested there had been unable to speak their language, they knew assuredly her fervent penance had won favor with God, and if they prayed for her according to her last earnest message to them, she would plead for them before God's face.

Shortly after Rachel's death, Rose entered the convent, and received the habit of the order, and in due time was professed. She was, however, constantly sent, as well as other of the Religious, to assist Constance in the care of Lady Beauville. But latterly Isabel's strength had suddenly given way, wit out

any apparent cause, and the physician declared death was at hand, and, with an intensity of anxiety, the watchers waited for some sign of reason, and fervent were the prayers that went up that this boon might be granted.

On each side of the bed knelt a nun, and a physician was standing near, while in one corner knelt Father Louis, the almoner of the hospital. There was a change on the sufferer's face, and she turned restlessly from side to side. She fixed her eyes on Constance as she entered.

"Constance, is it you?"

Constance bent over her. "Dearest, I am here."

"I see all, I know all," she murmured. "Forgive me, ere I die."

And Father Louis came near, and she said—"Father, bless me, for I have sinned deeply. Is there hope for me, father?"

And Father Louis answered—"He that cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast out."

And the watchers withdrew, and the room was closed to all save the priest and the dying penitent. And then they were recalled, and the last rites of the Church took place, and Isabel made her last Communion. After that she spoke but little, but those words were treasured up afterwards, for in them lay hid a depth of penitence, and of self-abasement, and of the childlike faith that clung to forgiveness in the Precious Blood.

She looked at Constance, and she blessed her for her long years of patient devotion. "Thou hast comforted me, my sister, and God will comfort thee in thy last hour." The night came; she fell into a gentle sleep, and awoke in her death-agony. It was not long, but sharp; but the prayers of Holy Church went up with might, and at last peace came.

"Mother!" she cried, looking upwards, "do I see you at last? Mother and Walter—how glorious!"

And Constance's eyes also looked upward, for she, too, almost fancied she saw angelic forms, and for a moment she murmured, "Lord take me home, also." But only for a moment, and then the humble, patient spirit turned again to her task on earth, to watch, to wait, to pray.

Within a year of their arrival in Belgium, Lord Beauville procured a divorce, and immediately afterwards married again. The next news that came to Constance was, that her darling boy, the little Marquis of Moreton, was dead. In the midst of his childish glee, while riding on a pony in the park of Bertram Castle, the pony stumbled, threw the child, his head struck against the root of a tree, and he was taken up dead. Poor Constance! when the first burst of the mother's agony was over, while she pictured to herself those golden curls lying stiff in the coldness of death, and those merry blue eyes closed forever, became comforted, and thanked God for thus taking one of her darlings safe in his innocence to the country where there are no more partings; but her anxiety for her remaining child grew keener, and increased when she received the news of her own divorce, which the duke, after the death of his heir was induced to seek, and afterwards that of his marriage to Mistress Elizabeth Fortescue, a woman of the same nature as her mother—stern, implacable, and bigoted. But there was no help on earth, and Constance prayed on. Years passed from the time of Isabel's death, and Constance spent her time between prayer and good deeds. From the feet of the Mother of Sorrows where she poured out her aching heart, she went to comfort the afflicted, to bind up the broken-hearted. All in sorrow, all in sickness, all in suffering, knew her well. "The pale English lady," was the title the Belgians gave her. She was kind to all; but when, as it sometimes happened, refugees from England came for shelter, her sympathy poured itself forth upon them with infinite tenderness. The sick valued the touch of her cool hand, and the sound of her soft voice. The sorrowful raised their heads as they looked at her, bearing her bitter trials so meekly; priests, who were venturing on the English mission, came to see her to beseech her prayers; for in their might, before God's throne, they had great faith. The Religious, also, of the convent, when in trouble or distress, were wont to ask their superioress's

leave to beg the English lady to pray for them; but of all who loved her, and she loved, the dearest were the little children.

They flocked round her when she went forth; and she could enter into their gambols, and soothe their childish sorrows with a mother's care. She was not wont to say much, but her few words of counsel sank into their hearts, and checked many a hasty word or foolish action. In such deeds her calm life passed away; and gradually her step grew feebler, and a hollow cough shook her frame, and Sister Mary of the Cross (which was Rose Ford's name in religion) saw plainly that for her, too, rest was coming.

At last she could not go beyond the convent walls, and then she grew weaker still, and could no longer leave her chamber. It was a peaceful room that of Constance's; the windows looked into the convent garden, with its bright flowers and shady trees, and one transept of the church was in view; and Constance lay on her couch, and gazed on the fair things. His hand had made, and thought of the time when she, too, had played among the flowers, blithe as the birds that flew past the window; and she remembered what she was, stricken and suffering, with death near, and she rejoiced.

It was on such a day that two persons might be seen passing through the streets, and inquiring anxiously for the Augustinian Convent. One was a tall and handsome Frenchman, and he bent with tender care over a young lady who clung to his arm, and whose fair complexion and sunny hair marked her at once as having English blood. They paused before the door of the convent, and the lady cast an eager glance on the gray walls.

"Does an English lady reside here?" said the gentleman to the portress.

The woman answered him by bursting into tears.

"Oh, is she dead?" cried the lady, in a tone of agony.

"No, no, Madame; but near to death. You had better see Mother Prioress."

They were shown into the parlor, and an aged nun, the Prioress of the convent, entered.

"You ask for the Duchess of Bertram," she said; "she is very ill; and few, indeed, are they whom we can allow to see her;" but she glanced at the lady: "You are English, and that has ever a claim upon her." And then the nun started. "Madame is a kinswoman of our dear and noble lady?"

"Reverend mother," said the lady, going forward, "I am her child."

Sister Mary of the Cross went gently into Constance's room; she sat, as we have said, gazing on the fair scene, and then on a crucifix she held in her hand. The nun knelt down by her side.

"Has she come, my sister?" said Constance, gently. "Yes, I know all; that Mother's Heart has heard my prayer, and I shall see my child ere I die."

And for the few last days of Constance's life, she was watched and tended by a daughter's love.

Mary Bertram's was a strange history; her childhood had been an unhappy one; her step-mother was stern and unloving, and treated the child with undue severity. It tended, however, to keep alive in her mind a tender remembrance of the mother's fondness she dimly remembered. She never forgot the prayer she had been taught, and she cherished an intense desire to know more of the religion for which her mother was banished. When she grew up, and made her appearance in the world, she was taken notice of by the French ambassadress, who remembered Constance, and who, from political reasons, was high in favor at court. By her Mary was introduced in the faith, and by her means a marriage was arranged with the Marquis de Coucy, who had been attached to the embassy, but who, on his marriage, would return to France. Mary was one to inspire ardent affection, and he was as eager to grant as she to ask that their first act should be to visit Belgium, and see the mother from whom she had been so long parted.

So thus it came to pass that Constance first saw her beloved child received into the Catholic Church, and left her the wife of a Catholic. All earthly sorrows and cares were over; and

leaning on Mary's bosom and holding Rose's hand, she not long after passed to her home.

At the same hour, in a royal palace, there was another death scene, and the sufferer sat upon the ground in sullen despair, and "dared not" die in her bed.*

Long ere this Basil Travers and Arthur Leslie (who became a priest) had gained the martyr's crown, and in their turn, "gone to Tyborne."

And Thoresby Hall. We must not forget one look at that and its inhabitants, and what they have been doing these long fifteen years. Good Sir Robert sleeps with his father, and Sir Henry Thoresby rules the hall. Blanche, too, has long since gone to her reward; and Mary and Clinton reside at their manor of Northwolds, near Colchester. Sir Henry has married, and little merry voices wake the echoes in Northwolds and Thoresby Hall, and childish feet patter up and down the stairs, and childish minds wonder much why the large tapestry chamber at Thoresby is kept so sacred, and never used save by the priests.

Three hundred years are past and gone! The last of the Tudors and the last of the Stuarts alike crumble into dust. A new dynasty holds the sceptre of England, and a queen, with many womanly virtues, sits upon the throne. The rack and the torture-chamber are things of the past, and the savage laws of Elizabeth can be found only in some obsolete statute-book. Men walk abroad in safety, for England is free!

Still fondly do we linger over the places where our martyrs suffered and our confessors endured. Still stands Thoresby Hall; its walls are gray and the ivy clings lovingly to them. Though still the property, it is no longer the habitation of the noble line. The pressure of fines removed, they have grown wealthy, and a more stately house has arisen for their home, and their honored name is on the rolls of England's nobility. There has been no stain on the history of their house. No apostate has ever been reckoned among their ancestry; and in Thoresby Hall, though the daily sacrifice was oft suspended, and the faithful worshipped in fear, still, never through those long three hundred years has the sound of alien worship, of

mutilated rites, or of false doctrine, been heard within its walls. The chapel now was the chapel then; small and not richly adorned, yet breathing the odor of a changeless faith, of an abiding presence. And the lime-trees send forth their sweet fragrance in the moonlight, while other lovers perchance plight their vows; and on the grassy slopes the sunlight shines. Go visit Thoresby Hall, as we erewhile did, on some summer day, when the scorching glare of the sun is almost blinding, and yet around Thoresby there breathes the air of coolness and repose. Go look at the "hiding-hole" where Walter de Lisle once lay and prayed. Look around the garden and mark the rose-trees bending to the earth with their luxuriant weight, and feel as we did, that over Thoresby Hall there breathes a "perpetual benediction."

And what of Tyborne? Three hundred years are past and gone, and the tall trees are cut down, and tall houses have risen in their stead. A wilderness of houses, and the once muddy, broken road is smoothly paved, and the green fields are laid out into Hyde Park; and the rush of gay carriages, and gayer ladies pass by, without a single thought, the place where many won the martyr's palm. How few know the spot where, close by the Marble Arch, there stands a little mile stone to tell where Tyborne stood. Its name now serves to mark a fashionable quarter of the town, and there are none who, like the Catholic Queen,* kneel at the spot and water it with their tears. It is hard, indeed to stand there, in the midst of bustling, rich, gay London, and recall the scenes such as we have dwelt upon in these pages; and yet Tyborne should not be forgotten; its witness pleaded to Heaven, and it pleads still more powerful than man's weapons, more availing than his strong words; for—

"God knows it is not force nor might,
Not brave nor warlike band,
Not shield and spear, not dint of swords,
That must convert the land;
It is the blood of martyrs shed,
It is that noble train
That fight with word and not with swords,
And Christ their captain."†

* Henrietta Maria.

† Poem on Father Campian's death, published at the time.

* Lingard.

The Blind Man of Argenteuil.

IN the immense library of a large and sombre hotel at Rouen, which was ornamented with portraits of magistrates in the scarlet robes, there was seated an aged man of venerable appearance, seemingly engaged, by the light of a lamp, in meditation and study. From the richness of his dress, it was apparent that he belonged to the first ranks in society; and, in fact, this old man was Laurent Bigot de Thibermesnil, first advocate in the parliament of Normandy, a man of great abilities and still greater virtues, one of those learned magistrates of the sixteenth century whose judicial acts shone with so great a splendor. His long and laborious day at the palace began at five o'clock in the morning. For many years he had performed his legal functions with high success, and had suggested to the parliament decrees destined afterwards to become laws in the province; and now the indefatigable old man gave himself up to another kind of employment, which seemed to him a relaxation; he was laying the foundation of a rich collection of books and manuscripts, which in after years became celebrated, and is even now spoken of in France, though its treasures have unhappily been dispersed.

Engaged at this moment in examining a very old manuscript which had been sent him by his friend Turnèses, he was suddenly interrupted by the noisy exclamations of two young men, cried not far from him, who were reading Horace, and who cried out, enchanted with the verses of that great poet. These

two youths were Emeric Bigot, his son, and Etienne Pasquier, the schoolfellow of Emeric. Pupils of Hotoman, Cujas, and Baldwin, the two friends had come to Rouen to pass the holidays together. Laurent Bigot wished to see the ode that thus electrified them. And soon the old man's enthusiasm equalled that of the young ones. And who would not have thrilled at the description of true merit thus portrayed by Horace—"Dwelling far from vulgar minds, intrigues, cabals, favors solicited, and degrading refusals; overturning all obstacles, rising above earthly trifles, shining with spotless glory, and conquering for immortality, etc." Laurent Bigot, continuing this beautiful ode, had just read those energetic lines where the poet paints the cripple seizing with a firm grasp the guilty man whom he had preserved, when suddenly a noise was heard at the foot of the gallery, and a magistrate was introduced. From his extreme pallor, agitated features, and humble attitude, one would have expected to see, not the lieutenant of criminals at Rouen, an upright and just judge, but one of those guilty men who every day trembled in his presence.

"I have failed," said he at length to Laurent Bigot, "I have failed, I confess it; but in mercy do not condemn me without a hearing." The lieutenant then commenced his recital, the king's advocate calmly listening, and the two young men also, with the curiosity natural to their age.

"A citizen of Lucca," said he, "named Zambelli, had es-

established a house of business in England, where his affairs had greatly prospered. At the age of fifty he had made his fortune, and wished to return to his native country to finish the rest of his days near a much loved brother. He wrote, therefore, to his family, and the news overwhelmed them with joy. Soon a second letter, dated from Rouen, where he had been since his arrival from England, announced that he would be at home in the course of two months. It would take that time to terminate his business at Paris, and to make the journey. A home was prepared for him at Lucca, and every day he was expected; but two, four, six months passed by, Zambelli had not appeared, and what was strange, even no letter had been received from him. The uneasiness of his family was very great. Cornelio, his brother, went to Paris, where he made many inquiries, but without success. He visited all the houses with which Zambelli had hitherto transacted business. In these houses they had seen, or thought they had seen, Zambelli. An individual had come under this name, and collected money to a considerable amount; the merchants showed Zambelli's signature written at the back of the receipts. 'All these signatures are false,' cried Cornelio indignantly; 'describe the impostor to me, that I may seek him everywhere.' But they could not satisfy him on this point; no one could remember the man. Thus an audacious theft had been committed, and perhaps even a frightful crime. Cornelio, pursuing his researches, returned from Paris to Rouen. He inquired at all the hotels in that city. At the hotel La Crosse they had seen Zambelli; he had remained there some time; from thence he had gone to Paris, with a valet; this valet had not been remarked. A considerable time had passed since then, and how was it possible to recall the features of a servant amongst thousands of others who were constantly arriving with the gentlemen and merchants who frequented the hotel, which was one of the first in Rouen?

"It was then," continued the lieutenant, "that Cornelio came to complain to me. I agreed with him that a great crime must have been committed between Rouen and Paris; but how discover the guilty person? At last, in the midst of our numberless and vain researches, a sudden idea occurred to me, and I hastened to act upon it. Seven or eight months since, a jeweller named Martel, unknown at Rouen before that time, had opened a shop here. No one knew where this man came from; there was something strange, too, in his looks and general appearance. He was silent as to his former life; and those who had hazarded questions on the subject received evasive answers, made with ill-disguised embarrassment. Struck with the similarity of his business to that of Zambelli, and influenced by an involuntary presentiment, I sent some one, under pretence of making purchases, to enter into conversation with him, and casually mention the name of Zambelli. At this name he saw Martel turn pale, and look at him with an air of uneasiness. This fact confirmed my suspicions. I resolved then to proceed further, but here (I confess it) the excess of my zeal has misled me. By my order, a sergeant went to Martel's house, to obtain from him the sum of four thousand francs, which I pretended was owing to some one under a false name, and must be paid immediately. Martel, as soon as he saw the account, exclaimed it was false, and refused to pay it. Summoned by the sergeant to return with him to prison, Martel, acting on the first impulse, followed the sergeant with the security of a man certain that he owed nothing; but stopping all of a sudden, and evincing great anxiety, he said—

"I am quite easy as to this arrest; it is a forgery, and I can prove it; but is there nothing else besides? Have you heard anything?"

"The sergeant pretended astonishment; and on protesting that he did not know what he meant, Martel was reassured, and followed with a firm step to the jail, where he was locked up. An hour after he was brought to me.

"It is useless to dissemble," I said to him, in an imperative tone. 'Yes, the bill they showed you is false; but what you have still to fear concerns a more serious affair. A citizen of

Lucca, named Zambelli, is dead, and it is you who have assassinated him. Do not seek to deny it; I have the proofs. But calm your terror. Zambelli was a stranger; no one here will avenge his death. By some sacrifice on your part we could hush up this sad affair. You must confess all that you know on the subject: your life is only spared on this condition."

"Struck, fascinated as it were, by the assurance with which I spoke, smiling at the hope of escape, he cried out, 'I see in all this the hand of Providence. As there was no witness but myself, it could not otherwise have been known to you. I will confess all, then. My fortune is yours. How could I refuse it to him who gives me life?'

"His resolution was taken; he was going to relate all, when the apparition of the scribe, who, ordered by me, came to take his confession, seemed to awaken him from a dream; he had perceived the trap, and when I invited him to raise his hand and swear to tell me nought but the truth,—

"No! I have nothing to tell," cried he. 'I have nothing to tell. I am innocent!'

"All my efforts, all my entreaties to obtain another word being useless, I ordered him back to prison, still hoping he might change his mind. But what had I hoped for! To-day, instigated by those villains who always infest prisons, he protests against his incarceration, and accuses me and the sergeant who arrested him, of doing so on false pretences. This is my fault, then. You cannot doubt the purity of my motives. But what will the parliament say—those messieurs so rigid towards inferior officers? Must it be that thirty years of service will all at once be forgotten, and my life the forfeit to an excess of zeal, which was for the good of the state? I have told you all. Tell me my fate."

"Reassure yourself," said Laurent Bigot; "and pardon me for not having abridged your anguish. The parliament knows all, and excuses you. To-day, even, the chambers are assembled at my request, to decide on this affair. I have spoken for you with all the warmth of a man who esteems and loves you; but your thirty years of service and integrity have pleaded more eloquently than all I could say. The protest that Martel had lodged against you is suspended for three months; the case relative to the assassination of Zambelli is now committed to parliament. Martel will be transferred to the conciergerie. Everything tells me you have found the real culprit; but how are we to obtain the proofs? where is the body of the murdered man? That is what we must discover. In two days I shall leave here. I shall take the road from Rouen to Paris, and search from village to village for the traces of the crime. Let us hope that my researches will not be in vain. Knowing all, I ought certainly to have interrupted and consoled you; but I obeyed a feeling which you well understand, since you are a magistrate and father. Emeric, my son, and you, Etienne Pasquier, both one day destined to wear the gown; you, Emeric, to succeed me, perhaps; you, Pasquier, to shine in the parliament of Paris, or in some other sovereign court; learn that as it is not permitted for any one to do evil that good may come, a judge, above all, ought not to seek truth by means of falsehood. Such actions are unworthy of a magistrate; the most brilliant success would not excuse it. Justice and truth are sisters: a judge ought not to separate them. Let us wait for time, which unveils every mystery."

Three weeks afterwards there was a great commotion in the village of Argenteuil. The inhabitants had suspended their different occupations, quitted their dwellings, and assembled round the door of the Hotel De Heaume, and by their talking earnestly together, and questioning eagerly all those who came out of the hotel, it was evident something very unusual was going on within. In fact, in the large common hall, which was transformed for this day into a hall of audience, Laurent Bigot, assisted by the bailiff of Argenteuil, was engaged in interrogating a number of witnesses respecting an occurrence which had taken place there some time previously.

The worthy magistrate had caused searching inquiries to be made in almost every town and village between Rouen and Paris, with a view to discover the fate of Zambelli, but without

success, when, at the last moment, just as he had begun to despair of success and was thinking of returning, a light suddenly flashed upon him. He was informed that some time before a corpse had been discovered in the vineyards near Argenteuil. Bigot hastened to view the body, which was already half devoured by wild beasts, and in the mutilated remains he easily recognized the tall figure of the unhappy Zambelli, from the description given by his brother Cornelio.

The bailiff began in a loud voice to state the facts relative to the discovery of the corpse, when suddenly a piercing cry interrupted him, and at the same time an old blind man, whom no one had before remarked, presented himself before the magistrate and his assistants. He seemed a prey to great agitation, and made a sign that he wished to say something. It was old Gervais, a beggar, born in the province, and beloved by everyone. When his wanderings brought him to Argenteuil, he was lodged in the hotel. He had just arrived, returning from a long tour, and had seated himself unperceived upon one of the stone benches placed round the large chimney. It was from thence issued that loud cry, when, listening to what the bailiff was reading, he heard him speak of a corpse discovered among the vines. But absent so long a time from Argenteuil, what could he know?"

Laurent Bigot looked with a sort of respect at the fine noble figure of the old man.

"Unhappy being," said he "what can you have to tell us."

But, recovered from his first emotion of surprise, which he could not suppress, the blind man now seemed embarrassed and undecided.

"Oh! my lord, may I speak?" said he. "Is there no danger of my life?"

And he turned his white head on all sides, with an air of distrust and affright.

"Speak, speak without fear," said Bigot; "but once more, what can you know?"

The old man then related, that about eight or nine months since, going from Argenteuil on a journey, he was upon the high ground which surrounded the parish, when warned by the barking of his dog, he stopped and listened. A man's voice, but weak, plaintive, supplicating, was heard. "Monster!" it cried. "Thy master! thy benefactor! Mercy! Must I die so far from my country, from my brother!"

Then he had heard a last cry, agonizing, heart-rending, like that of a mortal in the last extremity, and afterwards the heavy steps of a man who walked painfully under the weight of some great burden.

"Influenced," said Gervais, "by an involuntary movement, I advanced. 'Who have you there,' I cried—who weeps thus? 'It is nothing,' answered a trembling voice—'nothing; only a sick man I am carrying, and who has just fainted. Good man, go about your business.' And again I heard the voice speak low and menacing. 'Thank God that you are blind, or I should have done the same to you.' I understood then that a frightful crime had just been committed, and I cannot express to you what I felt. All contributed to alarm me; for, at that moment, a tremendous storm broke over our heads, the thunder shook the ground with its loud peals, and seemed to pursue the murderer. The world appeared coming to an end. Trembling and almost beside myself with terror, I continued my journey, swearing never to reveal what I had just heard; for the criminal might belong to this country, and the life of a poor blind old man like myself was at his mercy, if he wished to take it. But just now, when the bailiff spoke of a corpse found a short distance from the place where I heard the voice, I could not suppress a cry. I have now told you all, and I trust no harm will come to me on account of it."

During the recital of Gervais, Bigot appeared absorbed in a profound reverie, which lasted sometime after the blind man had ceased speaking. Then suddenly addressing Gervais, he said,

"Old man, I am going to ask you a question; reflect well before answering. This voice which you heard on the mountain, which answered and also menaced you, does your memory

retain a distinct remembrance of it? Do you think you could recognize it again if you heard it?"

"Yes, my lord!" answered Gervais; "as I could recognize the voice of my mother, if she still lived, poor woman!"

"But," said Bigot, "have you ever thought of it? Some time has now elapsed since that day."

"It seems to me to be but so many hours!" answered Gervais; "for my fright was then so great, I think I am always hearing it, and the voice of distress also, and the thunder, which on that day pealed louder than usual."

And as Laurent Bigot was again about to express a doubt, the blind man, raising his hands towards the sky, which he could not see, said—

"God is good, and never abandons the blind. Since my sight is gone, my hearing is more acute. But if you disbelieve me, ask all the inhabitants of Argenteuil; they are here, or near the hotel. On fête days they often amuse themselves in trying to confuse me, by counterfeiting each other's voices, and asking 'Who has spoken?' They will tell you if I am ever deceived."

The people cried out that all the old man said was true; that when he was in Argenteuil this was one of their pastimes, and a merry game to the young in the parish. Some hours after Laurent Bigot left Argenteuil, and returned to Rouen, taking with him blind Gervais. In the village (lately so agitated) everything resumed its usual appearance. The inhabitants had returned to their dwellings, excepting those who stopped to chat with their neighbors on what they had seen and heard; and many conjectures were formed as to the result of this mysterious affair.

In the 16th century, most magnificent was the great hall of audience where the parliament of Normandy assembled; with its fine platform of black ebony, ornamented with fantastic carvings in every shape and form, shining with gold, azure, or vermilion; its flowered tapestries, its vast ceiling, its gilded ceilings, on which shone the royal arms of the kings and princes of France; the violet canopy which was used when the sovereign was present; and lastly, the large picture of Louis XI., the father of his people, and his minister and adviser, the great Cardinal D'Amboise, who had bestowed upon the province a permanent exchequer. When on a great day of assembly one hundred and twenty magistrates were seated there to administer justice, in long scarlet robes, headed by presidents in ermine mantles, the multitude, awed and astonished at such magnificence and majesty, bent humbly before this imposing senate; and still more when, raising their eyes, they saw above the assembled magistrates a beautiful painted crucifix; with Moses the lawgiver, the four Evangelists, and our divine Saviour between His Blessed Mother and the Apostle. At this sight one could hardly restrain a movement of fear, for it recalled to the memory the beautiful verses of the Psalmist, where God is depicted in the midst of judges who deliberate—God, deciding and rendering justice with them.

It was in this august sanctuary, on the morning of Christmas-eve, that the members of the Grand Chambre and La Tournele were assembled. But this time they wore their black robes, and their pensive attitude showed they were about to transact an affair of rigorous justice. Great curiosity was displayed as to what would be the result of this secret conference. The assassination of the merchant of Lucca, the arrest of the supposed criminal, the discovery of the corpse of the victim, the unexpected testimony rendered at Argenteuil by a blind man, formed inexhaustible subjects of conjecture to the immense multitude who thronged the court and avenues of the palace; and each one affirmed the day was come which would give liberty to an innocent man, or send a monster to the scaffold.

After long debates in the parliament, it was decided to send for the blind man of Argenteuil. Gervais appeared before the assembled chambers. His deposition, simple and circumstantial, made a deep impression; but still doubts occupied the minds of all. Was it not strange to put the life of a man at the mercy of the fugitive reminiscences of a blind beggar?

who could do nothing else but hear? Was it possible this man's memory could retain what he had only once heard? It was then decided that it must be clearly proved; that he must be confronted successively with all the prisoners, Martel among the number, and if, after hearing them speak, the blind man, spontaneously, and without once hesitating, should recognize the voice which had so much struck him, this last sign, added to other circumstances, would no longer leave any uncertainty.

It was not without design that Christmas-eve had been chosen for this trial; one hitherto unheard of in the annals of judicature. To command the appearance of the prisoners on an ordinary day, would have awakened suspicions, and suggested means of evading the proof to be put to them. On Christmas-eve, however, there would have been great astonishment in the conciergerie, if the order had not arrived for a general meeting at the palace, the usual custom on the eve of great fêtes, when the members of the council examined the criminals; sometimes even these magistrates (on occasion and in reverence of the fête) gave liberty to those who were detained for slight offences. Above all, it was requisite to impress on the blind man, that Heaven had invested a sacred power in the decisions of the parliament. At its head was the president Feu, whose wisdom and gravity had caused him to be named Cato the Censor—

"Gervais," said he, in a solemn penetrating voice, "there above us, is the image of the Son of God, who was unjustly put to death by false witnesses. Swear by this crucifix—swear by God Himself, who is here present, and listens to us, that you will affirm nothing that you are not as sure of as your existence, or of the misfortune that deprived you of the light of the sun."

After this oath, which the old man took with a fervency that dispelled all doubts as to his sincerity, the proof began. Already eighteen prisoners had appeared and answered the questions put to them. The blind man listened, but made no movement; on their side, perceiving a person unknown to them, they remained quiet and indifferent. It was then that the nineteenth prisoner was introduced in his turn; but who shall picture his amazement at the sight of Gervais? Who shall describe the sudden alteration in his manner, his pale and contracted features, the perspiration that chilled his forehead, and his sudden prostration, which was so great, that it was necessary to support and lead him to a bench, where he could not even seat himself without the keeper's aid; and, overcome as he was, when he came a little to himself, one perceived in his involuntary gestures the remorse of a tortured soul, or, perhaps, the horrible regret of having committed an incomplete crime—of not having finished his work.

The presidents and judges awaited anxiously what was to follow; but at the first words Martel answered to the questions of the president, the blind man, who, since the commencement of this scene, which he was ignorant of, had remained immovable, suddenly roused himself and listened; he listened eagerly—listened again, then quickly recoiled, and making an eager gesture of horror and alarm, as if to repulse with his hands an object he knew was near, and of which he was afraid, sought to fly, crying out—

"It is he! Yes, it is the voice I heard at Argenteuil."

The jailor removed Martel, more dead than alive, the president ordering another prisoner to be brought forward, but at the same time making a sign that was understood by the jailor, and some minutes after it was Martel again that he brought,

and who was a second time placed on the bench, and interrogated under a false name. New questions drew forth different answers; but shaking his head with an incredulous air, the blind man said—

"No; it is a feint. I recognize the voice that conversed with me on the heights of Argenteuil."

Six times all the prisoners from the Conciergerie were severally brought forward, each time under a new order; and even to some of the astonished prisoners were addressed questions which concerned the assassination of Zambelli; and warned by a sign from the president, they answered to the accusation of which they were ignorant. But the blind man did not hesitate for an instant; he always recognized the voice he had heard on the mountains of Argenteuil.

At length, then, the horrible mystery was cleared up. A superhuman voice seemed to fill the vast chamber of audience, and say to the blind man—"It is he! it is the assassin of Zambelli!" This thunder, loud and menacing, like that which sounded on the heights of Argenteuil on that day of crime, seemed to overwhelm the guilty man, who shuddering and convulsed, murmured a tardy confession, now useless, for, to all the magistrates seated there in judgment, the effect of the proof had been such, that not a shadow of doubt remained in the mind of one of them.

A few minutes after, in a dark cell of the Conciergerie, was pronounced a terrible decree, whilst in the public square near at hand, dreadful preparations were being made; for, in those times, to the man found guilty of death there was no morrow—the sun rose no more for him.

Some hours had passed, and the streets around Saint-Michel, Saint-Sauveur, the old place, and the college of Saint-Georges, could scarcely contain the inhabitants of the town, who were returning from the Vieux-Marché, where they had been witnesses of a horrible spectacle; and these men, these women, pale, trembling, terrified, repeated to one another the solemn words they had just heard. That voice had sounded to them from the depths of grief; and feeble as it then was, nearly extinguished, yet what authority it had, what power in those last moments! Thundering, formidable, speaking like the voice of God to that immense multitude, who, coming to see, was now silent, listening eagerly, as if it had no other sense. And the voice had uttered words that would long be remembered; for what moralist, what philosopher will find more believers, or leave more lasting impressions than a condemned criminal confessing and detesting his crime to the world, which recoils from him, and to heaven, who punishes him; denouncing his cupidity and thirst for gold, which precipitated him into the abyss, declaring, as one who knows it, that however distant he may be from the place where his crime was committed, God will be there before him, will have waiting for him, to spy him out, an unsuspected witness that the rest of the world was ignorant of,—seeing all, forgetting nothing; first an inexorable denouncer, and then a terrible judge.

About fifty years after this event, Laurent Bigot being long dead, Emerie had succeeded him, and became president. His friend Etienne Pasquier was a noble and venerable old man of great learning, engaged in composing his curious "*Recherches sur la France*." "Wishing to show, he said, that God sometimes permits crime to be proved, when man thinks discovery almost hopeless, he took care not to forget the almost miraculous fact he was witness to in his youth, and which we have given an account of, nearly word for word as we found it in his narrative,

The Black Seal.

"IS it true, then, mother, that when I shall be fifteen years old you will tell me something from the other side of the grave, as Monsieur le Curé says?"

"Yes, my child, if at fifteen years old Michel Lacroix has become a better boy, and more studious at school, he will be able to read fluently for himself the message which I have to communicate to him at that time, in accordance with a will."

"I begin to know all my letters already, when they are not too small."

"Already, eh! that's not much to boast of, I think, at your age; you ought to be ashamed of yourself."

"What would you have, mother? I have no wish to be a learned man, still less a half-learned one, who is, as Monsieur le Curé says, a pest to society. When you send me to school of a morning and I see the birds singing amongst the leaves, and the horses frisking in the meadows, I fancy I am going to prison. Why is it so, mother? Because my chest requires air—because my forehead requires the breeze which blows in autumn—the snow which falls in winter, and the sun which glows in summer. Away with study, and long live the liberty of the fields and of the sea! Now, mother, I must just tell you my way of thinking. I wish to be a sailor, as my father, my grandfather, and all my ancestors were."

"It is a noble profession for a Breton; but your father and your grandfather knew how to read, write and cipher."

"The famous Jean Bart knew at most how to sign his name."

"What one could excuse in the time of Jean Bart would be unpardonable nowadays."

"Very well, mother, say no more about it. I shall soon know how to read in an old book, as I already know how to do the parts of a vessel."

"Oh, as for that," said a stout man who hitherto had taken no part in the conversation, "as for that, I can vouch for my pupils being the first readers of a ship in the country, without flattering myself. Now, then, child, tell me what a garnet is?"

"The garnet is a rope which has a simple pulley tied fast to a great stay, and serves in loading a ship."

"Very well, child, what are bow lines?"

"Bow lines are long cords which are joined on to shorter ones called clews, which are tied to the corners of the sail."

"Very well. What is the use of bow lines?"

"The use of bow lines is to pull the bolt-ropes of the sail tight, so as to hold the wind better."

"Very well; explain to us the meaning of studding-sails."

"Studding-sails are small sails, which are put up when the wind is very light, to aid those of the vessel."

"What is a crosstaff?"

"It is a graduated instrument by which sailors can tell the height of the sun and the other stars in the horizon."

"Better and better, child; What does 'to drive with the tide' mean?"

"To lead a vessel against the wind in the current of a river."

"What is a cathead?"

"It is a great rope which runs through a pulley fixed to a large iron hook, the use of which is to handle the anchors."

"Bravo, child! you have answered like a real Tourville. What do you think of it, sister?"

"I say that merely reading a vessel is not sufficient nowadays for a man who wishes to push his way. I think that Michel ought to be ashamed to be the last in school."

"But to make up for that he is the first in all our holiday games; and amongst those of his age there is not one who

knows better than he how to hoist a rope, to moor a cross vessel, and to fix the shrouds. Only yesterday he made big Simon take a bath gratis, who is a head taller and five years older than he is."

"Is it true, Michel?"

"It was quite necessary to defend the honor of the parish—the tower is the flag of the Breton peasant—woe to him that touches it."

"What did Simon do to you?"

"Nothing; just think what would have befallen him if he had!"

"Then, you little rogue, you were the aggressor?"

"I am not capable of it, mother. Judge for yourself. I was mending our nets when big Simon passed by, driving before him his grey ass—the old grey one you know. Where are you both going like that?" said I.

"To enroll Gris in your parish, so that there may be one the more, and to replace your master, who they say is very ill."

"Simon answered that, did he—the rude boy?"

"That is not all, mother, listen to the end."

"You must take care never to let Gris drink by moonlight," added Simon.

"Why?" said I, clenching my fists.

"Because," said Simon, "he would drink the moon, which would be very unfortunate for him."

"I did not understand him. Nevertheless, I was nearly bursting with rage. Simon continuing, related to me that one evening an ass was drinking by moonlight at the pool of our parish; a cloud eclipsing the moon, the darkness prevented some women who were washing some things at the pool from seeing. These women, said Simon, accused the ass of having drunk the moon, and, as the poor beast could not justify himself, they ripped him up in order to obtain possession of the moon, which accordingly soon re-appeared. Now, mother, what would you have done if such an insult had been paid you?"

"I should have contented myself with shrugging my shoulders."

"But I preferred rubbing those of Simon; but, as I rubbed them rather hard, it appears I flung him into the water to refresh himself."

"But you might have drowned him, child!"

"Oh, no fear of that, Simon swims like a mackerel!"

"Really, you never mean to be good!"

"Well, then, by our Lady of Auray you will see. From to-day, mother, I set foot in the path of reason, and, before six months' time, I shall know how to read, write, and cipher, as well as my father or mother."

"Then, nothing will prevent my giving you the message which you are to know when you are fifteen. May God and our Lady of Auray keep you in your good disposition!"

This singular dialogue took place between a woman already advanced in age, the daughter, wife, and mother of a generation of fishermen; an old sailor who was her brother, and a boy whose strong neck and round shoulders denoted unusual strength.

Madame Lacroix, who had been a widow for ten years, had lost her husband, who had been made prisoner on board a vessel of which he was commander, and sent to the desert island of Cabrera, where he died. Her husband's father and one of her uncles perished in the fatal battle of La Hogue.

The day on which the mysterious message was to be delivered to her boy was drawing near. On the eve of that day Michel Lacroix made his first communion; devoutly prepared for this

great action in a Christian's life, he received this divine food with sentiments of fervent piety; the more so as his age allowed him to appreciate the importance of the grace which God gave him in communicating Himself substantially to his soul. Like Jean Bart, Michel Lacroix learned the duties of a Christian at an early age. At last the epoch so long desired had arrived; Michel had attained his fifteenth year; this day, which was to exercise such a great influence upon his life as a sailor, was the 24th of March. Having risen with the sun, Michel went at nine o'clock to his mother, who, clothed in mourning, gave him her hand, saying: "Michel, I have been waiting for you;" then after a moment's silence, which appeared a century to the young man, who was waiting impatiently, she added: "My child, I am pleased with you; you have been faithful to your engagement. I must fulfil the promise I made you." Then she went to an old walnut wood trunk, upon which an artist of the middle ages had sculptured the Massacre of the Innocents; she took out from it a little hard wooden chest, with gilt-headed nails round the edges, carefully looked. Madame Lacroix slowly opened it, and taking from it a letter, the square envelope of which bore a large seal of black wax—she gave it to her son, who read it with deep emotion. It was from his father.

Several times whilst reading this letter, dictated by heroic sentiments of Christian charity, Michel had been obliged to pause to wipe away his tears with the back of his hand. His mother also wept. After having pressed his father's signature to his lips, Michel said—"Willingly would I give the beard that I shall soon have, that the murderers of my father were within my grasp."

"Why, my son?"

"Because I should like to meet them one day at the end of my boarding-pike, and so the son would worthily avenge his father's death, I assure you."

"You have already forgotten," replied Madame Lacroix, "that your father's last words were those of pardoning and forgetting——"

"I will pardon also; but I could never forget, and memory would augment my strength and would make me combat with happiness my father's jailers of the island of Cabrera, though, when once they were down, I might give them my hand to raise them up."

"Well said, child!" said his uncle Jerome, who had assisted at the end of this scene. "You will do honor to your father's memory."

This occurred in 1817. Michel had just attained his fifteenth year; but one would have taken him for three years older, to judge by his robust health and formed character. He begged so much of his mother, that she at last consented that he should go to Brest, where he engaged himself on board a vessel of the navy. Later, when he had fulfilled the conditions enforced by law, he signed his engagement as a sailor.

At this time, a French army, commanded by the Duke d'Angoulême, crossed the Pyrenees, to reestablish a throne overturned by the revolution. For the first time Michel regretted that he was a sailor, because he was thus deprived of the pleasure of combating, as a soldier, a nation which had occasioned his father's premature death. The entrance of the French troops into Spain was a triumphant march, celebrated by the victories of St. Sebastian and of Trocadon. The revolution was subdued, and King Ferdinand regained the sceptre of which it had deprived him. Some thousands of prisoners were brought into France.

Among these was a Catalonian, whose body seemed to have been copied from that of Hercules; and who was still more remarkable for the instincts of an indomitable and savage nature, marked by an implacable hatred against the French. Matteo, confiding in his strength, and above all in the skill with which he dispatched, with scientific precision, all adversaries whom he could reach with the point of his sword or the end of his gun, had distinguished himself under Mina by acts of ferocity almost incredible. Chief of a band of guerillas, he boasted of never having given quarter to any Frenchman whom he had

surprised in an ambuscade. Thus, he soon became the terror of Toulon, occupying the leisure of his captivity by encounters generally fatal to the unfortunates whom he had drawn into a quarrel by unjust provocation.

One evening in a *café*, a young Parisian, named Perret, taking his place at the same table without asking his leave, was insulted, provoked, and at last killed before several witnesses. This young man had engaged himself on board a small vessel which was under repair in the Toulon docks, the same in which Michel had embarked, with whom he was thus on intimate terms. Michel vowed that he would punish the murderer of his comrade. An occasion was not long in offering itself. The next day Michel went early to the *café*, where Matteo went every evening, to lie in wait like a wild beast for its prey. A few minutes later Matteo entered, proud of yesterday's success, with a provoking assurance, his cap on one side, and his hand on his hip. Seated in a corner of the hall, at a table where there was only room for two people, Michel was reading attentively the newspaper of the day; Matteo sat down immediately at his side, and throwing down his red cap on the table under Michel's nose, he rolled a cigarette in his fingers, then lighted it, and blew an immense body of smoke right across his neighbor's face. Michel jumped from his seat, raised his hand, but at the moment when he was going to let it fall upon the face of the Spaniard, he calmed himself and on y said—"Sir, do not repeat that, for tobacco smoke does not at all agree with me when it is so near."

"Perhaps you would prefer that of powder," replied Matteo.

"Perhaps, as you say—every one to his taste."

"In that case it would be easy for me to satisfy yours."

"We shall see that; but I shall be occupied in reading this paper for a quarter of an hour, so leave me to finish it."

"Be good enough to excuse me, but I came here on purpose to read it, and, as I am in a hurry, you must give it up to me."

"Ah—You are in a hurry, sir! Very well; but, as I am not, I advise you to take a draught of patience instead of the coffee you ordered." Then, turning to the waiter, Michel said in a calm though emphatic voice—"Waiter! a cup of patience for monsieur, if you please; serve it hot and very sweet—monsieur wants sweetness!"

Matteo, who understood French as well as he spoke it, jumped in his turn from his seat, ready to throw himself upon Michel, who stopped him with a look, and these words—"Patience is the mother of safety."

The French sailor was drinking beer. The Spaniard, annoyed by Michel's coolness, took up passionately his red cap and placed it upon the sailor's jug, who burst out laughing, saying—"It appears, Signor Cavalier, that you take that jug for a Spaniard's head."

Matteo bit his lips, and remained silent at the keen reply. Silence reigned in the interior of the *café*; it was the silence of the calm which on the seashore preceeds a storm. The brow of the Spaniard had become quite purple with rage; passion was working in the swelling veins of his forehead. The forehead of the Frenchman was as calm as the heart of a Breton on the day of the feast of our Lady of Auray.

"This plate of red carrot here, annoys me," said Michel; "I pray you, sir, to put it off your head."

"I shall do nothing of the kind, for it is already too warm here."

"Nevertheless," said Michel, getting up and opening the stove door; "see, the fire is going out."

"Ah!—well, keep it in."

"What with?"

"Whatever you like."

"Thanks for your advice," then the sailor, approaching the table, took the cap from the jug, and kicked it into the stove.

"You are a dead man!" said Matteo.

"But not yet buried," replied Michel; "the gravedigger has not had time to dig my grave."

"I will place you in it myself!"

"When, if you please?"

"To-morrow!"

"At what time?"

"At daybreak!"

"At what place?"

"Behind the great cemetery wall."

"That is enough."

"Now finish your newspaper, the sooner the better, for in the interest of the future life I advise you to see a priest. Now, then, make haste. I allow you five minutes." Thus saying, he pulled out a large gold watch, which he placed before him on the table.

At the sight of that watch a cloud seemed to pass over Michel's face, which till then had remained unchanged, but now became quite pale. This watch bore on the case of it a figure of St. Michel bearing a cross as a lance.

"Where did you get that watch from?" cried Michel, in a hurried tone.

"What is that to you?"

"I wish to know, because I believe it to be a family watch; the watch of a gallant Frenchman who was basely assassinated by a Spaniard in the island of Cabrera, in 1810—it is my father's watch. But speak, sir." A complete change had come over Michel; with inflamed countenance and clenched fists, his upper lip curled with an expression indicating thirst of vengeance, his eyes bloodshot, his voice short and quivering, he repeated—"Where have you taken this watch from?"

"I have not taken it, sir. It came to me by descent at my father's death."

"What was your father's name?"

"The same as mine."

"What is your name?"

"That of a brave Spaniard, Huertas."

"Huertas," cried Michel, "is the name of an assassin. Your father treacherously assassinated mine. God is just, because to-day he sends the son of the murderer to the son of the victim."

The impression produced by this scene can easily be understood, but cannot be put into words. Accompanied by two witnesses chosen from amongst the inmates of the Café de Paris, the Frenchman and the Spaniard went to a deserted place situated at the extremity of the town. The stars of heaven, like funeral torches, lighted up the way that Matteo had gone the day before at the same hour, to add one name more to the bloody catalogue of his victims.

"What are your arms, sir?" inquired Matteo of Michel, when they had reached the place.

"I am your man, sir, with any weapon you please," replied Michel.

"Let us cast lots—that shall decide!"

"Throw up a piece of money in the air—heads for the sword, and tails for the pistol."

The money came to the sword. The attack, which was made on both sides with great vigor, was of short duration. The Spaniard was obliged to yield, and was soon disarmed; he had placed himself upon a damp spot of ground, and his foot had slipped in the very blood which he had himself shed the day before.

"Strike, then," said Matteo, "my life belongs to you."

"Do you take me for an assassin?" replied Michel, giving a generous hand to his adversary. He added—"I could kill you, but I will not; the last wishes of my dying father impel obedience, which is due to his memory. Listen, sir, to the last recommendation of Michel Lacroix, who died in 1810, in the island of Cabrera, under the stroke of a man who has now appeared before God's tribunal; listen, sir!" Then drawing from a pocket-book, which he always carried about him, a letter sealed with black-wax, he read with emotion the following lines by the light of two torches, which the seconds had procured to give light for the combat.

"One day no doubt you will have, as your ancestors have had, the honor of serving France either as a soldier upon land, or as a sailor in the vessels of the State. You will bravely do your duty I am sure; in an enemy wounded or conquered you will only see an unhappy or disabled brother. Far from putting him to death, give him generously your hand to raise him up. You must become a rampart to his body if attacked by your furious companions. Such is my will at the hour of my death: remember the will of a dying person is something sacred and holy."

"I remember," added Michel, after a moment's silence, which gave Matteo time for reflection: "I remember, and that is why at this critical moment I offer a friendly hand to the son of the murderer of my father. Brother, I forgive you."

Matteo threw himself into the arms of his generous victor.

The day after this nocturnal encounter, the conclusion of which produced a lively emotion in the city of Toulon, Michel Lacroix received a box containing the watch which was the sacred heirloom of his family.

About this time a great fire broke out in the Toulon arsenal, and occasioned great disaster. At one time the flames, increased by a north wind, threatened even to blow up the powder magazine. At this critical moment, a man, a sailor, distinguished himself above all others by his courage and self-devotion: it was Michel Lacroix. His noble conduct was deemed worthy of reward. The prefect of Toulon, having told him to come to his house, took him into his room and said to him, "Michel, you are a brave young fellow; the king, who knows how to reward every kind of service, will no doubt recompense you; I intend to ask him to give you the cross of the legion of honor; nevertheless, if there is any other favor you wish for, tell it to me; I will do all that depends upon me to obtain it for you."

Michel, who was as modest in success as he was brave in peril, replied—

"Monsieur, the prefect, you are very good in bestowing your praises upon one who, having done his duty like many others, is already quite enough rewarded by the testimony of his conscience; nevertheless, since you deign to grant me a favor, I accept your offer with gratitude."

"What do you wish?"

"Amongst the prisoners of war who are at Toulon there is a young Spaniard, who is on the point of losing his wife; he is in despair at not being able to be with her; as a husband and a father he is wounded in his tenderest affections. He would bless the hand which, setting him at liberty, should allow him to console the last hours of his beloved wife. It would be an act of holy generosity worthy of France. Permit me to hope for it of your benevolence. Instead of the cross of honor you proposed, I ask the liberation of Matteo Huertas."

"Brave and generous Michel!" replied the prefect, who knew all the circumstances of the combat we have narrated. "Noble boy, your father in heaven ought to be happy and proud of having such a son. Give me your hand that I may press it in mine!" And, going to his desk, he wrote a decree which allowed Matteo Huertas to return to Catalonia. A month later Michel received the cross of the legion of honor, the cross of the strong and brave.

Michel Lacroix retired when still young from the service of the navy, to assist his mother in her declining days. He has found happiness and peace in his marriage, and is the father of a numerous family, of which the eldest reads as well in big books as in the rigging of a vessel; and if the perfection of happiness were possible in this world, he certainly would have thought it was placed in his own house. His friends, who sometimes ask Breton hospitality of him, see suspended at the side of a black wooden crucifix a case with a gilt edge; in this case is a watch, with the figure of the patron Saint Michael upon it, and at its foot is a cross of honor, and a large black seal.

THE NOTARY'S DAUGHTER.*

CHAPTER I.

LA PINEDE.

ON the coast of the Mediterranean, between Marseilles and Toulon, a small harbor lies snugly ensconced in the rocks and protected from the wind by a stony projection shaped like a pier. In stormy weather vessels sometimes seek the shelter of this little haven, but at other times the only boats in it are those belonging to the fishermen of the town. The name of this little port is La Ciotat. It had never been heard of until the Carlo Alberto in 1831 landed the Duchesse de Berri on that point of the French coast, and at the time when this story begins its existence was as little known in France as if the quaint little city had been situated in the neighborhood of Pernambuco or Batavia. In geographical dictionaries it was said to contain four thousand five hundred inhabitants, and the vintage of its hillocks was highly commended.

At the time we are speaking of, a carriage road from Marseilles to La Ciotat was in course of construction. In spite of great efforts, the work proceeded slowly. Great obstacles arose from the nature of the soil. Engineers and miners found it difficult to deal with the rocks and precipices in their way; but there was no lack of zeal in overcoming nature's resistance, for the new road was to open communications with Marseilles—and for the inhabitants of La Ciotat, Marseilles was a sort of Paris. As to the real Paris, they knew its name, they talked of it, but never dreamed of going there; nor is it quite certain that they all did know of the existence of Paris in 1835. This is no exaggeration, for at that time many a poor peasant used to take off his hat as he passed before a picture of Louis Philippe, and called him *the good King Louis the Sixteenth*. The storm which convulsed the world from 1789 to 1794, and the glory which dazzled it from 1800 to 1815, had passed unperceived over the heads of these good people.

Now all is changed. A dockyard for steamers has been established at La Ciotat. The benefits and the evils of civilization have reached that remote corner of the world. The traveler's eye reads its name as he passes by one of the stations of the railway, and catches a glimpse of the picturesque little town and its busy port full of shipping.

At about a league and a half from La Ciotat, at the foot of a hill covered with dwarf pines, ilexes, and holly, stands a rock where the goatherds of the neighborhood are wont to congregate, and which they call from its peculiar shape, "the Sugar-loaf." At the time in question, just opposite this rock two roads diverged in different directions. The new highroad leading to Marseilles made an angle and stretched its dusty length between the olive plains on each side of it, and the other road, or rather pathway, half choked up with furze and brambles and supported by dilapidated stonework, ascended the hill.

On a sunny morning in March a man was sitting on a stone ledge at the bottom of the Sugar-loaf rock. His dress and appearance were those of a thriving bourgeois—his figure short and stumpy, his complexion brown and ruddy. He looked between forty and fifty years of age. There was in his countenance a mixture—not an uncommon one in France—of good nature and shrewdness: shrewdness of a commonplace sort, with more sharpness in it than cleverness. There was a cunning look in the fat little gentleman's eyes; but his laugh was frank, which

indicated that the cunning was assumed and the frankness natural. A man's character is more easily read in his manner of laughing than in any other way: what is false or affected in it is too apparent to deceive. The name of this personage was M. Toussaint Lescalle. He was a solicitor, one of the two royal notaries established at La Ciotat. At the moment when we find M. Lescalle seated at the foot of the Sugar-loaf hill, he seemed to be expecting somebody. Now and then, shading his eyes with his hand, he glanced at the new road, as it was then called. The white pebbles sparkled like diamonds, the ground glowed like burnished gold, the olive trees glittered like quicksilver; but it was not the peculiarities of the landscape which occupied M. Lescalle. He beguiled his impatience by reading over a letter which he drew out of a huge portfolio on his knees, and then by looking every two or three minutes at his watch with manifest signs of impatience.

At last he got up, seized his portfolio and a bundle of keys which had been lying in his hat, and began to ascend the path up the hill. As he was slowly advancing, the sound of a horse's trot reached his ears, which made him suddenly stop and turn round, and then he saw a man on horseback approaching at full speed, upon which he retraced his steps.

"Upon my word, M. le Baron, I had given you up," he exclaimed, as the gentleman came up to him.

"No wonder, my good friend," was the reply; "but if I am late I assure you I could not help it. I have been spending two days with the Marquis de Previs, and did not arrive at Marseilles till this morning."

"Will the Marquis lend a helping hand about the election?" the solicitor inquired.

"We had some conversation on the subject," the Baron said, in a way that showed he did not intend to disclose what had passed between him and the Marquis. M. Lescalle took the hint, and allowed the subject to drop.

Before the two men left the foot of the Sugar-loaf hill, the Baron dismounted and tied his horse to the trunk of an olive tree. Glancing at the stony and steep pathway, he said, "I am not going to run the risk of breaking my Silphide's legs up that horrid road."

The lawyer repressed a smile, for although the old mare might have once deserved that fanciful name, her actual aged condition and broken knees were not in keeping with it. There was a sort of resemblance between Silphide and her master. He too was old and thin and worn out; a small head, long limbs, and an aquiline nose, gave him a combined likeness to a race-horse and a greyhound. The Baron de Croixfonds had every right to this aristocratic appearance, for he was descended—so he always said, at least—from one of King Rene's brethren-in-arms during the wars between the houses of Anjou and Aragon. His wealth was supposed to be greatly inferior to the antiquity of his family, but he had an elder brother who was a peer of France and very rich. His expectations, in consequence, were more brilliant than his means.

As they slowly ascended the hill, M. Lescalle was the first to speak. Assuming a somewhat consequential manner, he said, "I am rather afraid, M. le Baron, that this excursion of yours will prove a fruitless one."

"Why so?" the Baron asked.

"I mean that you will not be able to carry out your plans."

"Have they changed their minds about selling La Pinede?"

"Oh, dear, no; but there is another purchaser in the field."

"A *bona fide* one?"

"Yes, a *bona fide* one."

* The following tale is an imitation, and partly a translation, of "Un Marquis en Province," by Madame Leonie Douet, who has most kindly sanctioned this adaptation of her work.

"How have you heard of it."

"Read this letter. It is from M. Berthet of Marseilles."

The Baron glanced at the contents of the letter, and asked, "Who is this Comte de Vedelles?"

"An ex-magistrate, I think. One of the old nobility of Lorraine."

"I wonder how high this new purchaser will bid."

"Considering the price at which we start the sale, there is ample scope for bidders," the solicitor observed, in a confidential tone.

"We shall see," the Baron replied. "That low price may have tempted this Count. When he finds that a neighboring landowner is in the field, he will withdraw."

"And you will purchase?"

"Well, my son Cesaire's election must be secured, and to secure it we must possess La Pinede. I must do all I can;" and after a pause the Baron added, "and then my brother will help us."

"Oh, if the Vicomte de Croixfonds lends his assistance, there will be no difficulty."

"I am glad in any case to see this mysterious place," the Baron said, without taking notice of M. Lescalle's remark. "It is an old fancy of mine, which I have never been able to gratify. Ever since my return to Croixfonds, fifteen years ago, I have wished to go to La Pinede, but I never could get in. Have you always had possession of the keys?"

"I received the keys of the chateau sixteen years ago, when Count Honore went away after the death of his wife, and I have never been there myself since that time. He had given me exact orders on the subject, and I adhered to them."

"And has nobody been into the house—nobody at all—for sixteen years?"

"Count Honore, as long as he lived, spent a week there by himself every year."

"In what a wretched state it must be," the Baron said.

"I should think so indeed," M. Lescalle replied, and taking the largest of the keys which he carried in his hand, he thrust it into the rusty lock of an iron gate.

Above this gate was a medallion in the style of Louis the Fifteenth's time, on which the letters H. and P. formed a monogram, surmounted by a coronet. On each side of the gate a stone wall followed the undulations of the uneven ground and surrounded the whole summit of a tall hill, which seemed to rebel against this rigid belt by throwing out such an immense quantity of brambles and ivy that in several places breaches were opened in the wall. About sixty acres of barren, wild, uncultivated land, dotted about with clumps of firs—remnants of the old forest which had given its name to the place—were inclosed within its precincts, and in the centre of this property stood the house, respectfully called by every one in that neighborhood the *Chateau de la Pinede*.

Small as it was, something distinguished and old-fashioned in its appearance justified that appellation. It had been built in the reign of Louis the Thirteenth, partly of brick, partly of stone, and formed a perfect square; irregular rows of windows on every side, and a single door studded with projecting iron nails, gave it very much the look of a gigantic dice.

Before the entrance-door was a broad paved terrace, bordered by a parapet, on which vases of blue china contained dried-up mould and sticks which had once been wreathed with green. Four acacias, planted at each corner of this terrace, had grown to a magnificent size. Their branches, freed from the trammels which used to compel them to form a sort of tent before the house, had taken all sorts of strange liberties. One of them had availed itself, in a free and easy manner, of the opening made by a broken pane of glass in one of the windows of the second story, and intruding into a bedroom, astonished every spring the spiders, its sole inhabitants, by a burst of green leaves, white blossoms, and delicious perfume. With the exception of this broken pane, everything in the little chateau was hermetically closed. Thick shutters protected the windows of the first story, and heavy iron bars those of the ground floor. If it had not

been for that audacious branch of acacia and the grass growing amongst the stones of the pavement before the entrance-door, it might have been supposed that the inhabitants of La Pinede had only left it a few days ago.

The grounds evinced the contrary even more than the house. The dried-up soil, covered with branches and bindweed, presented the most desolate appearance. A fine avenue of olive trees, which led from the gate to the terrace, some few peach and almond trees and straggling vines, which made it their business to strangle the fruit trees in their entangled knots, alone testified that the place had been formerly cared for. The soil of Provence is unproductive when left to itself. To make it fertile, two things are required—labor and water. For sixteen years La Pinede had been left without the beneficial ministrations of spade or watering-pot.

The scene above described met the eyes of M. Lescalle and the Baron de Croixfonds, when, after having with difficulty pushed open the iron gate, the hinges of which refused to do their part, they walked up the avenue, arrived in front of the Chateau de la Pinede, and by means of another of M. Lescalle's heavy bunch of keys, entered the house and found themselves in a large hall paved with marble, which emitted that peculiar odor of dust and decay which housekeepers call a close smell. M. Lescalle rushed into the adjoining saloon and threw open the windows. The gladsome morning sunshine flooded suddenly with light the long-closed room, and the two men looked at each other in silent astonishment. The principal pieces of furniture were grouped round the chimney, in which half-burnt logs of wood seemed to be waiting for the fire-tongs to rekindle them.

On one of those low couches which used to be called *Causeuses*, some tapestry work with a needle hanging to it, and an unfolded pocket handkerchief, were lying. A child's table standing near this sofa was covered with little white sheep wearing pink collars and fraternizing with lions, wolves, elephants, and stags, of proportionate size. Shepherdesses in blue gowns and hunters in red coats, resting at the bottom of a large box of playthings, seemed destined to join that happy family. The box was lying open on the couch by the side of the piece of work. It was impossible to mistake the mother's place and the child's place in that room. Her work and its play seemed only just interrupted. Where was the mother? Was she not about to come in? Where was the child? Would not the sound of its laughing voice soon ring joyfully on the stairs? No; all was silent as the grave.

The two men looked at each other with that sort of sadness which is sometimes felt at the sight of an empty nest. An old lawyer, and an old man of the world! There must have been a strange pathos in that room to have thus affected them.

On the corner of the chimney was lying a dried-up nosegay of violets, which the first touch would have destroyed, and an old newspaper. The Baron de Croixfonds took it up and read the date—March 7th, 1819.

"Yes; the eve of the anniversary of the poor Countess de la Pinede's death," the notary observed.

"Come, Lescalle, give me some account of it," the Baron said, resuming his usual manner. "You keep your reminiscences as closely under lock and key as the domain of La Pinede."

"I had made a promise on the subject," M. Lescalle answered; "but now unfortunately there is no reason why I should keep it."

"Well, then, let us break the seal at once," the Baron said. "I like family histories, and I suppose as there was so much secrecy observed in this case, that this one must have some peculiar interest." As he said this, the Baron stretched himself at full length on the sofa, took out his cigar-case, and assumed a listening attitude.

"If you expect some complicated or extraordinary history, your curiosity will be disappointed," M. Lescalle answered. "The state in which you find this place—and this room, in which everything tells its tale—reveals the simple fact that death snapped the thread of a young woman's existence, and doomed the life which was bound up in hers to a hopeless sorrow."

"I know the fact, but I want to hear details."

"You know, I suppose, that the La Pinedes were one of the oldest families in this part of the country, and that they built this little chateau in the midst of this pine forest when Les Trois Tours, their former abode, had fallen into decay."

"Yes I have heard all that ancient history. But what was their position in more recent times?"

"They did not go often to Paris, or to Court, but were always very popular in their own neighborhood, so much so, that they remained here quite unmolested through the whole of the revolutionary period. The Court party, after the restoration, never forgave their not having emigrated."

The Baron, whose family had emigrated, looked displeased, and said "I do not care for political details, my dear Lescalle. Let me hear their domestic history."

Their private history, M. le Baron, was closely connected with what I have just told you as briefly as I could, for it accounts for the fact that Count Honore de la Pinede concentrated his existence in the narrow circle of his domestic affections and his secluded home. One so young, so wealthy, so handsome, and so clever, would certainly have played a part in the world, if his principles during the empire, and afterwards a sensitive pride resulting from the circumstances I have alluded to, had not kept him aloof from social and political life. He knew the Bourbons were not favorably inclined towards him, and though his sympathies were Royalist, he would not condescend to curry favor with them, so he lived entirely in the country, and cared for nothing but his wife and his home."

"Whom did he marry?"

"His cousin, Mdle. de la Pinede. They had both lost their parents in early life, and had been brought up by an old childless uncle. From the time of their babyhood they had cared for each other, and cared for hardly any one else besides. It was one of those engrossing affections which seemed to supply to them both the place of all other ties. People used to say that these children realized the story of Paul and Virginia, only in their case it ended in a marriage. When Count Honore was twenty he married Mdle. Louise, who was eighteen. They had one child, a girl, and for six years their happiness knew no bounds. La Pinede seemed an earthly paradise. But in one day in one moment, it came to an end. Madame de la Pinede died suddenly of disease of the heart. Beautiful, happy, smiling sitting by her husband, who perfectly adored her, and her little child playing at her feet, she expired!"

M. Lescalle paused a moment, and then pointing to the sofa, said: "I see it all before my eyes as I saw it then. Her lovely face, white as a sheet and sinking on her bosom, her hand on the head of her child; Count Honore on his knees, trying in vain to make her smell salts, and looking at her with eyes which seemed to grow wild with terror and despair."

"How did you happen to witness this scene?" the Baron asked.

"I arrived here at the very moment it took place, having called to talk over matters of business with the Count. As I opened the door of this room, I saw what I have been describing, and knew at once that there was no hope—that all was over. I dragged the poor man out of the room. He seemed to have lost his senses, and for several weeks his friends were afraid he would quite go out of his mind. They urged him to leave the place, and at last, for the sake of his child, he consented to go away. But before his departure he dismissed all his servants, even the gardener, and locked up the house and the gates of the park. Then he sent for me, gave the keys into my keeping, and exacted a solemn promise that I would never use them—never go myself, or let anybody else go to La Pinede. It was a morbid fancy of his that the place where his wife had been born, had lived, loved, and died, should remain as a solitary monument to her memory, the tomb of his past happiness, an emblem of utter desolation and perpetual mourning. I promised to attend to his directions. After shaking hands with me, he drove away with his child and her nurse. For the sake of Mdle. Denise's education, the Count took up his abode in Paris. For

the last fifteen years he has always spent one week in March at La Pinede. For eight days shut up in solitude, for even then he would not admit any one into the place, he wandered like a ghost about the house and grounds. People about here think he was out of his mind, and lament that this ancient family should have ended so sadly. The last time he came he looked deplorably ill, and spoke of his failing health. I tried to cheer him up, and advised him to try some waters. He smiled in a mournful manner, and said, 'My good friend, the wound has never healed. It is not waters that can cure a broken heart. Do not look at me so sadly. Fifteen years ago I was indeed to be pitied; but now God has been good to me, and my release is at hand. I am happier than I have been for a long time past. My sufferings will soon be over.'

"But, Mdle. Denise," I said, 'you ought to wish to live for her sake.'

"Ah! my little girl!" he said, with some emotion. 'God will take care of Denise.'

"God, you see, was so much in his thoughts, M. le Baron, that I took it as a bad sign, and though I said all I could to make him more cheerful, I felt sure he would die soon, and so it turned out. Three months afterwards I received the news of his death, and then Mdle. de la Pinede, by the advice of her guardian, M. Legrand, made up her mind to sell this place. He has never been to see it, this fine Paris gentleman, and he does not know that its value has considerably increased since the new road to Marseilles has been made. I painted in somewhat high colors the deplorable state into which Count Honore's morbid fancy has allowed the property to fall, and so we arrived at a valuation which has placed it within reach of your son's means."

"In case we have no serious competitors," the Baron replied; "but that M. de ——. How do you call him?"

"M. de Vedelles."

"Well, that M. de Vedelles, who falls upon us from the skies, is a great bore."

"I did my best. The sale has scarcely been advertised at all at Marseilles—only for the last eight days, so that there has been hardly time for any one to know of it—but this purchaser writes from Paris."

"And how on earth did he hear of it there?" the Baron exclaimed.

"Oh, in a very simple manner! Mdle. de la Pinede has been educated at the Convent of the Sacred Heart, and the Countess de Vedelles visits the ladies there, and made acquaintance with the heiress, and they have laid their heads together on the subject. It was impossible to foresee this."

"It is the devil to pay!" the Baron cried. "If they bid more than two hundred thousand francs, we shall have to give it up. Even with my brother's assistance, and by getting into debt, we cannot go beyond that price."

"It is a great pity," the solicitor said.

There was rather a long pause, and then in a hesitating manner he added, "There might perhaps be a way in which the matter could be arranged."

"What way?"

"Under certain circumstances it would be in my power to place fifty thousand francs at M. Cesaire's disposal."

"Could you really, Lescalle?" the Baron anxiously inquired.

"But then you see, M. le Baron," the solicitor replied, speaking slowly and laying an emphasis on the words, "you see that sum constitutes a considerable portion of my daughter's fortune, and Rose is growing up."

"Oh! it is your daughter's fortune you are speaking of. Then in that case——" The Baron did not finish his sentence; but there was a look in his face which meant, "We need not say anything more about it."

"Can you reckon on your electors?" M. Lescalle asked.

"Yes, I think so. I have no anxiety on that point."

"If we come to an agreement, I might secure you a certain number of votes."

"Oh! pray do so. We cannot afford to neglect any chance."

"It would be rather a serious thing for me, however," the lawyer answered. "You see I cannot throw over the party which supports Richer de Montlouis, unless I had a good reason for it."

"Always on Mdlle. Rose's account?" the Baron asked, in a slightly satirical tone.

"Yes, M. le Baron, I am quite above board with you. I do not mind showing you the cards—Artemon Richer——"

De Montlouis," the Baron sneeringly added.

"Artemon Richer seems inclined to pay his addresses to Rose, and upon my word, he is so good a match that I am not inclined to put a spoke in the wheel by quarreling with his family and opposing the election of his uncle."

"You don't mean to say that you would give your daughter to that heavy dolt of a man, who is always lounging in the Estaminets?"

"Not if I could find a better match for her," the solicitor answered. "but——"

The Baron snatched up his hat, and walked out of the house into the avenue. He was determined not to look as if he understood. M. Lescalle dropped the subject, and the two gentlemen walked about the place calculating the worth of each acre of land, and exulting over the neglect in which everything was left, which certainly did seem likely to disgust any one who should visit it before purchasing.

When this sort of approximate valuation was concluded, they went back to the place where Silphide was leisurely grazing at the foot of the Sugar-loaf hill. The Baron mounted his steed and turned its head towards Croixfonds. The solicitor walked by his side for a few minutes, talking over some of the details connected with La Pinede, and then somewhat abruptly said: "I am very much afraid that M. Cesaire will not be elected."

Without giving the Baron time to answer, he bowed and left him, and as he hastened home with the fear of Madame Lescalle before his eyes, who could not bear to be kept waiting for breakfast, the little man murmured between his teeth: "That old aristocrat! I hope he understands that I can spoil his game."

M. de Croixfonds meanwhile was making the following mental ejaculations: "The presumption of these low-born people is becoming quite intolerable. To think of this vulgar attorney's venturing to offer me his daughter for my son. And now I suppose he will turn against us! But somehow or other Cesaire must be elected." His pride and his ambition pulling in different directions, the descendant of King Rene's friend went home in a very bad humor.

Three weeks afterwards the Comte de Vedelles became the owner of La Pinede. A bid of twenty thousand francs beyond the sum the Baron could produce settled the matter. When M. de Croixfonds was informed of this result he felt almost sorry that he had so decidedly snubbed M. Lescalle's proposal for unless his son could purchase a property in that part of the country, he would not be eligible; and as M. Lescalle took care to point out, this was not an easy thing in an old-fashioned locality where estates did not often change hands, the Baron knew perfectly well that this was the case, to remind him of it was like handling a smarting wound. It was with difficulty that he concealed his vexation.

CHAPTER II.

THE FAMILY OF DE VEDELLES.

THE Comte de Vedelles and his family arrived at La Pinede at the end of April, just at that moment so delightful in Provence, when the full burst of a southern spring adorns the whole landscape with a profusion of flowers. The blossoms of the peach and almond trees clothe the country in pink and white. The yellow stock, the purple iris, the blue salvia, the red valerian, and the wild vine cover every hill with a rich mantle of gorgeous colors, fringe every wall with bright tufts of waving

beauty, and embalm the air with an indescribable perfume. The days were mild and lovely, but the evenings sometimes very cold—thanks to the mistral, that terrible bane of the Provençal climate.

One night that this rough enemy was blowing with virulence and had prevented the usual stroll after dinner, three of the new inhabitants of La Pinede were sitting round the chimney where some pine-logs and burning cones were diffusing their fragrant perfume and not unwelcome heat. These three persons were the Count and Countess de Vedelles and their eldest son, Jacques de Vedelles. The Count was reading in a huge arm chair the Countess working at a piece of tapestry. Jacques, half sitting, half lying on a couch near his mother, poked the fire and watched the sparks as they flew up the chimney with an absent expression of countenance which betokened either an idle or a dreamy state of mind, which is by no means the same thing.

For some time no one spoke. The great huhl clock ticked, the logs crackled, the wind made strange noises amongst the pine trees.

At last Madame de Vedelles dropped a ball of worsted, and as her son stooped to pick it up she whispered to him. "Is George still out of doors?"

I suppose so," Jacques answered in the same low voice. Madame de Vedelles sighed, and another long silence ensued.

Though she had not meant her question to be heard, it had apparently caught her husband's ear for he rang the bell, and soon the wrinkled face and grey head of old Vincent appeared at the door.

"Is M. George at home?" the Count asked, without raising his eyes from his book.

M. George is finishing his supper in the little dining room. He has made a very good meal of it," the old man added in a significant manner, and almost before he had finished his sentence, George de Vedelles came into the room.

Though he was twenty his figure was so slight and his appearance so youthful that he did not look more than seventeen or eighteen years of age. The perfect symmetry of his features and the whiteness of his face gave it the appearance of a marble bust. It was only in his eyes that there was any animation. They were dark, sparkling, and yet soft, their dreamy, absent expression added to the peculiarity of this young man's countenance.

George's dress, unlike that of the rest of the family, betokened neglect. He had on that evening a shooting jacket and trousers much the worse for wear, heavy leathern gaiters and thick clumsy shoes. Had it not been for the fineness of his linen and his white and well-shaped hands, he might have been taken for a young gamekeeper.

After he had made a bow to his father and kissed his mother's hand he sat down on the couch near his brother. As he did so and turned towards him a bright smile lighted up his face, but only for a minute.

"What have you been doing, George?" the Count asked. "Why did you not come home in time for dinner?"

"I have been out shooting all day," was the answer; "and it was later than I thought when I came back."

"We may conclude, then, that you have brought home plenty of game."

"The season is very bad, and game, I fancy, scarce in this neighborhood."

"Then why are you always going out shooting? What an absurd fancy it is to be walking about all day with a gun on your shoulder without object or result." George made no answer, and played with the ears of a fine spaniel which had followed him into the room. M. de Vedelles went on: "It was just the same at Valsec, where there was plenty of game of every sort. You do not choose to exert yourself even as to idle sports. You never make an effort even for the sake of amusement. You will always remain a listless unsociable obstinate dreamer."

"But my excursions amuse me," George replied, "even

though I do not shoot much, and I think they are good for my health."

"Health, always health!" the Count exclaimed, "that is the excuse for everything. I am getting tired of it."

"But, my dear, if these long walks strengthen him," Madame de Vedelles said.

"He seems strong enough now," the Count rejoined. "It would be well to think of the improvement of his mind. Come, George," he added in a kinder manner, "can't you resume a little your course of studies? Jacques would direct and help you."

"Pray do not talk of that, my dear father. I cannot work my head. I tried to look into the books Jacques lent me, but I could make nothing of them."

"Don't you understand what you read?" Madame de Vedelles asked.

"Sometimes I do, and sometimes I don't, mother. But I hate study; it tries my head."

"Astronomy is, perhaps, your favorite pursuit," M. de Vedelles sneeringly remarked. "I saw you yesterday walking up and down the avenue, with your nose in the air, star-gazing, I presume."

"Oh, yes; I like to look at the sky; it is so beautiful."

"Then I hope your memory is returning. Do you find that you recollect the names of the constellations? If I remember right, you had at college the first prize for Cosmography."

"Oh! that was before my illness, father, and I have forgotten the names they gave to my dear, beautiful stars. Now I can only look at them and feel glad that God made them."

M. de Vedelles looked disappointed and sighed. His wife, who wished to interrupt the conversation, turned to her eldest son and said, "Dear Jacques, will you read us something aloud?"

"Yes, mother. What shall I read? I have got here *Valentine*, a novel of George Sand's, and *Sous les Tilleuls*, by Alphonse Karr."

"Novels," Madame de Vedelles said. "What sort of novels are they?"

"An amusing sort, I suppose," Jacques answered, "for they are very popular, and people do not generally care for tiresome books."

"But are they good books to read?" Madame de Vedelles again inquired.

"You need not take the trouble to ask, her husband said, 'the names of the authors are enough.'

"I know nothing about them."

"Well, I will tell you what they are," the old Count rejoined. "They are writers who seek for subjects of interest amidst the foulest scenes of human depravity and exhibit the worst passions of human nature under the fairest and most deceitful garb. M. Karr and Madame Sand hold a high rank in this intellectual orgy, which would end by utterly dishonoring literature in France, if, like all other orgies, it was not doomed to be short-lived and to die of its own excesses."

"You are very severe, father, on these poor authors," Jacques said. "If they had appeared before you when you sat on the bench, they would have found no mercy at your hands."

"I should have made short work with them," the old Count answered, and then turning to his wife he said, "I suppose you do not wish Jacques to read to us such books as those, my dear?"

"No, indeed," she replied. "Can you suggest anything we should like to hear?"

"Why not one of the *chef-d'œuvres* of our old literature?" the Count said, taking up from the table a volume of Voltaire's tragedies.

Be it remarked that the old man, who had so justly and vehemently denounced the immoral writers of his day, shared that unaccountable partiality for the wickedest, the meanest, and the most unpatriotic Frenchman of the last century, which lingers still in the minds of so many of his compatriots, even in those who, to a certain degree, have struggled out of the mists of

cynical unbelief with which he has poisoned the souls of successive generations. M. de Vedelles was of the number of those who had imbibed from the teaching of the eighteenth century a practical scepticism, if the two words can be united, which, though not obtrusively put forward, nevertheless influenced his thoughts and actions in various respects. He was a Royalist, a Conservative, and the husband of a pious woman. For all these reasons he always spoke of religion with respect, and he abhorred modern infidelity and lawlessness. But his secret sympathy with Voltaire and his school sometimes pierced through his political and domestic code of religious propriety, and Jacques de Vedelles, in spite of his mother's efforts, had derived from his father opinions which he more boldly announced and acted upon more consistently when not under the paternal roof.

Though a general admiration for Voltaire was among the half involuntary influences which the Count had exercised over the mind of his son, the proposal to read aloud *Merope* did not particularly charm him. He made, however, no difficulty on the subject, and drawing a chair close to the table where his mother was working, he began to read that somewhat dull but fine tragedy.

Jacques was gifted with a melodious voice and a great talent for reading. His father listened to him with delight, and his mother as if she was hearing the most exquisite music. George, before the end of the first act, was fast asleep. The Count de Vedelles kept glancing at the couch in a contemptuous manner. At ten o'clock every one rose and went to bed. Passing before his slumbering son, M. de Vedelles said to his wife, "And you try to make me believe he has a taste for poetry?"

"The poor child is tired," she said; "look how pale he is."

"Oh, I know that you can always find excuses for him; but really he cannot go on leading this kind of life. Only see in what a way he is dressed: those dirty shoes and worn-out clothes make him look like a poacher just escaped from the hands of the gendarmes!"

"I will speak to him about it to-morrow," Madame de Vedelles gently said.

During this conversation Jacques had roused his brother, and was whispering to him something he did not seem to understand.

On the first floor of the chateau there was a square ante-room with four doors opening into different apartments. After the Count and Countess had gone into their rooms, Jacques stopped his brother, who was going up the staircase to the next story, and said:

"You really must attend, George, to our father's wishes. He gets quite angry with you. You ought to have more sense."

"What sense?" George asked, having heard only the last word of his brother's sentence.

"The sense to behave like other people."

"I do not see what harm I do to anybody."

"That is not the question. It is your duty to obey your parents; and your way of going on, though it may not do them harm, displeases your father. Do try George, to acquire the habits of a gentleman. You are now twenty, and after all you are the Baron de Vedelles."

"I do not care whether I am or not," George answered. "Come, Jacques, please do not preach to me. You used not to do so, but now everybody tries his hand at it; even old Vincent whilst I was at supper, kept grumbling away about something or other I don't know what, for I was not listening. Really, people might leave me alone."

"Poor fellow!" Jacques said to himself; "it is impossible to make an impression upon him. We must be indulgent to his infirmities."

And there the conversation ended. The brothers shook hands; Jacques went into his handsome, well-furnished bedroom on the first floor, and George to a sort of large lumber-room upstairs, which he had made choice of as his sleeping chamber, after obtaining leave from his mother to arrange it as he pleased.

One of his fancies had been to divide and subdivide this room by means of curtains hanging on rods, made with the pieces of

tapestry which used to cover the walls of the rooms below before the house had been refurnished and silk substituted in their place. These ancient hangings represented a variety of Scriptural, historical, mythological, hunting, and pastoral scenes. Though faded and worn out, they were still very handsome even when seen by daylight; and in the evening, in the faint vacillating light afforded by a single candle, they seemed to assume all sorts of strange, fantastic shapes—white plumes nodded on the helmets of the knights; horses advanced against a wild boar standing at bay, surrounded by a pack of hounds; Abraham's sword seemed to descend towards the form of his son bound to the altar of sacrifice; knights, hunters, and patriarchs looked as if they were carrying on mysterious interviews; and a crowd of Scriptural and legendary personages rose from the canvas like figures in a dream.

George evidently took pleasure in living amongst these shadowy apparitions, for he often went up to his room before bed time, and his mother had sometimes found him in a fit of abstraction, silently gazing on the face of Rebecca at the well, or the holy Queen Bertha.

There was nothing in that room which deserved to be called furniture, except a bed, a dressing table, and a few chairs. In one corner stood an old lacquered harpsichord, which had once made the happiness of some ancestress of the Pinedes, but had been consigned to oblivion for many a long year. George had ruthlessly torn out of it the remaining strings and turned the case into a receptacle for shells, and pebbles, and dried flowers. Planks, supported by tressels, and covered with shreds of tapestry, did duty for a table, on which heaps of books were lying in hopeless confusion. Old Vincent had vainly asked leave to sort and arrange them. It was just over this disorderly library that the branch of acacia from the terrace extended its green foliage and white flowers. George would not allow it to be cut off or meddled with. He said it was the nicest piece of furniture in his room. An old easel, a fiddle, and two or three boxes containing unfinished sketches, and all sorts of odds and ends, completed the singular medley of things which filled this strange bed-chamber.

About an hour after he had gone to his room, but not to bed, and when the lights in the chateau were all put out, George de Vedelles softly opened his door and went down stairs. He stood an instant on the landing-place of the first floor, and listened to ascertain that no one was stirring. All was quiet, and he went on, first to feel for his shooting jacket, which he had left on the couch of the dining-room, and having found it, crossed the vestibule and let himself out by the front door, which he carefully locked. Once in the avenue he ran on towards the gate, opened it in the same noiseless manner, and then dashed down a little path which led through the olive woods to the sea.

CHAPTER III.

VISITORS.

On the following day the weather was beautiful. A mild shower in the night had softened the air, the short-lived violence of the mistral had not too roughly shaken the clouds of snowy blossoms, and the sun was forcing open the orange buds. Bursting on every side they filled the air with perfume. Everywhere the gardeners hastened to disengage the trees from the straw clothing which protects them during the cold weather. Spring had gained the victory, and was triumphing over winter.

The Count's family were sitting at breakfast. As a rule silence prevailed during that meal. He read the Paris newspapers; George, who was sitting opposite the window, ate heartily and stared at the flower-beds; Madame de Vedelles now and then said a few words to Jacques, who was sitting near her, and consulted him about points relating to the furnishing of La Pinede. A difference of opinion arose on the subject of the relative merits of dimity and chintz. Jacques advised chintz for the chair

covers in the drawing-room. Madame de Vedelles, faithful to the traditions of the Restoration, inclined to dimity.

The Count was appealed to and also voted for dimity: the Countess thus remaining mistress of the field, told Jacques, to comfort him, that she meant to put chintz in his room.

"Oh, it is not worth while to do that, dear mother," he answered.

"What! sit on Utrecht velvet all the summer, Jacques," she answered, "and in Provence too? I cannot think of such a thing!"

"That is not what I meant," he replied; "but as I shall not be here more than a few days, it really would be useless to go to that expense."

Madame de Vedelles' countenance fell. "I did not know you were going away," she said.

"Has not my father told you?"

"No."

"I meant to speak to you about it this very day, my dear," the Count said, looking up from this newspaper. "Jacques is anxious to go back to Paris, and I think he is quite right. He is losing time here, and time is precious."

"I suppose he is bored here," Madame de Vedelles said, scarcely able to suppress her tears.

"Oh, you must not say that, dear little mother," Jacques exclaimed, as he affectionately kissed her hand.

"And if he was bored here," the Count rejoined, "if this sort of idle life in the country did not suit him, I should not blame him in the least. It is a proper sort of life for an old man of my age who wants rest and solitude. But at Jacques' age a man must think of the future, and devote himself to his profession. Jacques has abilities which will secure success in any line he follows. He has studied for the bar. He has a decided talent for speaking, but it is not by walking about a park that he will acquire reputation, or by living at home that he will prepare for himself future electors."

"But my dear, the election which they are so excited about here, takes place in two months!"

"I am not talking of municipal elections. I mean the approaching general elections, where I hope to see Jacques cut a considerable figure. But for that end it is necessary to take measure beforehand, and to acquire a well-known name; that once secured, all the rest will easily follow."

"Do you really think so," Madame de Vedelles exclaimed, quite electrified at the prospect. "George! only think if your brother was to be, one day, a deputy! Would not that be a great honor?"

"A great honor indeed, mother," George replied helping himself meanwhile to some more chicken.

"Are you appealing to George on the subject?" the Count bitterly asked. "Do you suppose he has any ambition for his brother? Would he had a spark of it for himself!"

George took no notice of his father's sneering remark, and breakfast ended in silence.

As Madame de Vedelles rose from table, she looked out of the window and saw three persons walking up the avenue. "Here is company," she said. "Jacques can you make out who they are? I do not feel as if I had ever seen these people before."

Jacques looked and answered: "It is M. Toussaint Lescalle, mother, with his wife and daughter."

"Yes, it must be Lescalle," the Count said. "I sent for him about some business matters but I wonder why he brings his family here. Does he suppose that we are to be on a footing of intimacy with them?"

As soon as his mother uttered the word company, George had disappeared. In the meantime the visitors had been shown into the vestibule. Madame de Vedelles came there and civilly greeted them. The notary said that his wife had hastened to pay her respects to Madame la Comtesse, and had not been able to resist the wish to present her daughter to her.

Though Madame de Vedelles was not a little bored with this visit, she answered in a gracious manner, and when the Count

went into his study with M. Lescalle, she led the two ladies into the garden.

Madame Lescalle, like many of the inhabitants of provincial towns, was a person who took immense pains to disfigure, by affectation, excellent natural qualities. Born at La Ciotat, she had left it only twice in her life, both times to spend a week at Lyons with an aunt of hers. These northern journeys, as she used to call them, gave her an assumed right to lay down the law on points of fashion and taste. She was in the habit of pronouncing in the most positive manner that some particular stuff was out of fashion, that such a style of dress was antiquated, that such and such a color was in bad taste. No one ever ventured to differ from her. Privileges founded on assumption are singularly solid, and Madame Lescalles had long been the uncontested oracle of all the fine ladies of La Ciotat. Her decisions were undisputed, even by the wife of the mayor, the first dignitary of the town, and were listened to with deference in the house of the Richers de Montlouis, the wealthiest family in the neighborhood.

Firmly seated on her little throne, which had never been threatened with a rival, the notary's wife had felt a little anxious at the apparition on the scene of a Parisian lady of high birth and large fortune. She apprehended danger from that quarter, and like a skilful general, determined to go and judge with her own eyes of the extent of the peril. In case it proved imminent, she was not a woman likely to succumb without a struggle. Heroic measures were already floating in her mind. "If it is necessary," she thought, "I shall get my gowns from Paris."

When, after these desperate resolutions, she found herself in presence of a thin, pale, gentle, sickly-looking woman in a lilac silk dress and a plain white lace cap on her head, Madame Lescalle felt reassured, and still more by the fact that two or three silvery grey hairs were to be seen in the smooth black bands which lined the Countess' white forehead. It was evident that Madame de Vedelles did not care how she dressed, and would never be a leader of fashion at La Ciotat.

In the meantime the good lady, who had no idea what was passing in the mind of the notary's wife, was wondering at the peculiarities of her dress and manner. In spite of a stumpy figure and a too great *embonpoint*, Madame Lescalle had been and was still considered pretty. Her complexion was blooming, her features regular, her countenance good humored, and if she had been dressed with a little of that taste she was always talking about, she would have been a pleasing looking person, but by dint of absurd pretensions she often made herself ridiculous.

A great desire to dazzle the eyes of the inhabitants of La Pinede had led to an unfortunate display of magnificence in her dress on that particular day. She wore a bright green Chaly gown, the pattern of which represented branches of coral, immense sleeves inwardly sustained by internal circles of whalebone, which gave them no chance of collapsing. An imitation Cashmere shawl, a pink bonnet surmounted by a bunch of flowers which would have filled a jardiniere, completed this astonishing toilette.

From the first moment they met, these two ladies felt how little there was or ever could be in common between them, even with regard to that ordinary sort of intimacy which presupposes a certain degree of similarity in habits and tone of mind. They did not feel the least at their ease with each other during that first interview, and had it not been for Madame Lescalle's inveterate custom of asking as many questions as possible, conversation would have languished. But uncertain as she was of another opportunity of seeing the Countess, and anxious to collect from her an ample harvest of details about Paris, she made the best of her time.

Innumerable were her questions concerning dress, of course, and then theatres, parties, balls, and even the dishes then in fashion, for Madame Lescalle, with all her finery, was also a good housekeeper.

Poor Madame de Vedelles was very much behindhand in all these respects. Her delicate health and pious habits of life had always kept her out of the way of worldly pleasures, and she was

obliged to acknowledge her ignorance on several of those subjects in a way that perfectly astounded Madame Lescalle.

One strange question she addressed to Madame de Vedelles. "Does it not surprise you very much, madame," she said, "to see the sun here?"

"Why should it surprise me?" was the answer.

"I have been told that there is never any sunshine in Paris. It must be very dull."

Madame de Vedelles could not help smiling, and found it no easy matter to alter Madame Lescalle's impressions on that point. In order to interrupt the unceasing course of her visitor's questions, she turned to Rose Lescalle, who had remained till then in the background. Her dress was a great contrast to her mother's toilette. It so happened that she had returned only a few days before from the Convent of the Dames Bernardines at Marseilles, and was still wearing the school uniform. She felt a little ashamed of her plain blue frock, her white scarf, and her straw hat lined with black velvet. But in spite of her bashfulness and somewhat awkward appearance, Rose Lescalle was really very pretty. She was then just seventeen. Except a rather plump and rounded figure, there was no likeness in her to her mother. She was fair, a very unusual thing in Provence and a profusion of soft, smooth, golden hair surrounded her cheeks and encircled her head in two magnificent plaits. Her eyes were of so dark a blue that they looked black by candle light; their expression was sweet and shy, and at the same time open and confiding. The extreme delicacy of her features and her very small nose gave rather a childish look to her face. She looked like a beautiful little girl of two or three years old dressed as a grown-up person and seen through a magnifying glass. As to her complexion it was simply dazzling. For once the name of Rose had turned out appropriate.

Jacques was at once struck with astonishment at the mother's dress, and with admiration at the daughter's beauty. He tried to converse with the pretty Provençale, but could not obtain anything more than a yes or a no in answer to his questions. His mother was a little more successful.

"Do you like the country, mademoiselle?"

"I don't know, madame. I have never lived in the country."

"Then I suppose you like a town life better?"

"I have not tried yet living in a town, so I cannot tell if I shall like it."

Jacques laughed and said: "But you must have lived somewhere, mademoiselle, either in a town or in the country?"

"No, sir!" Rose answered. "I have spent six years in a convent; and if you had been at school there, you would know that it is not like being either in the country or in a town."

"You are quite right, mademoiselle. I understand now what you mean. A convent is not like any other place. You see people in the parlor, but it is not like meeting them in a *salon*. You have a garden to walk in, and trees to look at, but it is not like real country."

In the course of their walk round the grounds, the ladies, escorted by Jacques, passed by the threshing floor. There they found George kneeling against a low wall, his chin resting on his hands and his whole attention engaged in watching something on the ground.

"What are you doing there, my dear boy?" Madame de Vedelles asked.

George stood up, bowed to Madame Lescalle, and looked rather foolish.

"What were you so intent upon?" his mother inquired.

"Perhaps monsieur was watching those two beetles fighting in the grass," Madame Lescalle said, meaning it as a joke.

"Yes," George answered; "I have been looking at them for the last half-hour. They are wonderful creatures. Do you see that one with the blue scales, mother? It is such a beauty."

"My son George is a great child, I think," Madame de Vedelles said, smiling rather sadly and kissing her son's forehead.

"Come along with us," Jacques said, drawing his brother's arm in his. George made no resistance, and Rose seemed more at her ease than when walking alone with Jacques behind the

two mothers. She even ventured to remark upon the beauty of the flowers, and Jacques tried to keep up the conversation.

"I suppose, mademoiselle," he said, "that La Pinede is one of the prettiest places in this neighborhood?"

She shook her head and answered: "La Tour and Fond Saint are also very nice country houses. The views are not so fine, but then the gardens are much more neatly kept. You do not see in them those straggling vines which hang on all the trees here."

"You do not like them?"

"They destroy the trees, and prevent them from bearing fruit. And only look how those caper-bushes are springing up in every direction. My father says nothing injures a place so much. When once they take possession of the soil there is no getting rid of them."

"And why should they be got rid of?" George asked; "the lilac flowers of the caper-bush are lovely, with their long pistils which look like plumes."

"Yes, they are very pretty, but still you ought to have them pulled up."

"Why?"

"Because you could plant that hill-side with lucerne. It would grow as you have water here, and be a profitable crop. Lucerne sells very well in this country where there is so little hay."

"O worthy daughter of the house of Lescalle," Jacques mentally exclaimed.

"M. le Comte means, I suppose, to cultivate all this land?"

"I hope not, indeed," George hastily rejoined; "they can make a kitchen garden somewhere out of sight."

Rose opened her large blue eyes very wide, and said, "Would you really not wish to improve this property?"

George made no answer, and Jacques laughingly said that he meant to plant a great many rose-bushes about the place, and then Mdlle. Lescalle, when she came to La Pinede, would find herself surrounded by her namesakes.

This rather stupid compliment did not seem to displease the young lady, who blushed and smiled, and in so doing showed a row of the whitest little teeth.

Before the visitors left, the whole party sat down for a moment on the terrace. Madame Lescalle caught sight of the acacia branch which had pushed its way into George's bedroom. "Dear, me," she exclaimed, "did they really make over the house to you in this dreadful state? That horrid tree has quite spoilt the window. I could send you a carpenter this very evening, Madame la Comtesse, to saw off that abominable branch and mend the casement."

"Do not take that trouble, madame," Jacques said. "It is into my brother's room that the branch trespasses, and George will not hear of cutting it down."

"Oh, what an extraordinary idea!"

"It is a fancy of his."

"But the effect is so bad. It spoils the symmetry of this side of the house, and it just happens that it is the only side of La Pinede which is at all symmetrical. What a pity it is that the windows are so badly placed—otherwise it would be a handsome house. In those old times they had no idea how to build."

At that moment M. Lescalle's reappearance put an end to the discussion, and soon afterwards the visitors departed.

As they walked down the avenue, the notary and his family met a carriage, the dusty appearance of which betokened that it came from a distance. Madame Lescalle's eager curiosity could only discern that it contained an elderly gentleman and a lady with a black veil on. "Who are those people?" she inquired of her husband. "They are not any of the neighbors."

"I don't know them by sight," M. Lescalle said, after glancing at the vehicle which passed them rapidly. It stopped at the door of the chateau just as the notary and his family were going out of the gate of the park.

Vincent came forward, and the old gentleman said, "Will you tell Madame la Comtesse de Vedelles that Mdlle. Denise de la Pinede and her guardian have called to see her."

CHAPTER IV.

MORE VISITORS.

MDLLE. DENISE DE LA PINEDE was still in deep mourning for her father. Her plain black traveling-dress, made like a riding-habit, became her tall thin figure. Round her neck she wore a simple white muslin collar, and on her head a large black felt hat like those worn by the peasant women in Provence. Her regular features, large dark eyes, delicately white complexion, and the masses of black hair on each side of her face, were in keeping with the simplicity of her dress and the mild, serious expression of her countenance. She looked the high-born lady that she was.

M. Legrand, her guardian, was a singularly commonplace individual. The most remarkable thing about him were his gold spectacles and an imperturbable self-complacent manner.

Whilst they waited for Madame de Vedelles, he seated himself in an arm-chair and read the newspaper. Denise stood in the middle of the room and looked about her. After the lapse of sixteen years, she was gazing again on that once familiar scene! on that room where she used to play about near her mother's couch, at the arm-chair her father used to sit in when he came home from shooting. Nothing was changed in that drawing-room. Each piece of furniture was in its old place. The bull clock was ticking with the sound she so well remembered. Flowers filled the old vases in the corners of the room. All looked the same; but sixteen years had elapsed. Both her father and her mother were dead—La Pinede sold. Here she was as a visitor in the house where she had been born and had begun what seemed such a bright existence!

It was a strange feeling, a wonderful change! She looked at everything with that sad, curious attention with which the eye rests on once familiar scenes, and as the past rose before her with overpowering intensity, the orphan girl felt more deeply than she had ever done before the yearning pain of bereavement, the utter loneliness of her position. Her heart swelled with this consciousness, and silent tears coursed down her pale, beautiful face. She did not perceive that there was some one looking at her. George de Vedelles had been standing for some minutes at the door, entranced, absorbed in a state of intense wondering admiration.

The Comte and Comtesse's entrance interrupted George's ecstasy, Denise's contemplation, and M. Legrand's perusal of the *Journal des Debats*.

Mdlle. de la Pinede made a strong effort over herself, wiped her eyes, and hastening towards Madame de Vedelles, said to her in a low, tremulous voice, "I am sure, dear Madame de Vedelles, that you understand the feelings of a poor girl who, after so many years, sees again the home of her childhood, and that with your usual kindness you sympathize with her."

The Countess took the hands of her young friend in hers and pressed them affectionately. After a few words of sympathy and interest had been uttered and answered, Mdlle. de la Pinede explained that the Comte de Vedelles having written to her guardian to ask for the list of the family pictures and the things that had belonged to the late Madame de la Pinede, and not been included in the sale of the house as it stood—by the express desire of Count Hopore, who had foreseen the possibility of his daughter's selling the place—she had thought it better to come herself from Toulon, where she was spending some weeks with an aunt of hers, in order to point out herself what these exceptions were, and to arrange the matter with her kind friends.

Denise had such a pleasant voice, and such a charming way of speaking, everything she said was so courteous and so well expressed, that even the old Count, who would naturally have been disputatious and inclined to stand on his rights, fell completely under the charm, and hastened to say that Mdlle. Pinede had but to go through the rooms and point out whatever she wished to be sent to her, and her directions would be immediately complied with.

It was settled that the visitors should first take some refreshment, and then the business was to be proceeded with. In the meantime the following conversation was carried on.

"Shall you come to Paris next winter?" Denise asked the Countess.

"Oh, no; we have entirely given up Paris."

"On account of the climate?"

"Yes; I cannot spend the winter there."

"We sold Valsec only because my wife's health required a southern climate," the Count said.

"And do you mean always to live in the country? Will you not find it rather dull?"

"Oh, no; we have made up our minds to retire from the world. At your age you cannot understand such a resolution. You would think it very tiresome always to remain here."

Denise smiled and said, "I do not think it would quite suit me."

"How do you like Toulon?"

"I shall not be sorry to go back to Paris."

"Ah, I thought so," the Count said. "I know what Toulon is like, and the sort of society there: sailors and old dowagers, amusing enough to look at, but desperately dull to talk to. I suppose you do not mean, mademoiselle, to vegetate long in that dull seaport?"

"I am going to remain there some time longer."

"And what can induce you to inhabit such a tiresome place?"

"My aunt is very kind, and wishes me to stay with her as long as possible."

"Mdlle. de la Pinede invents all sorts of strange amusements for herself," M. Legrand said. "You would never guess how she wiles away the time in that horrid seaport town."

George, who had been leaning on the back of his mother's chair without joining in the conversation, but with his eyes and ears intently engaged on every word that was uttered, ventured to say in a low voice, "How, I wonder!"

M. Legrand laughed. "I shall get into a scrape, I suppose, if I speak of *l'œuvre des petits matelots*."

Denise turned to the Countess with a smile, and said, "It is only to you, dear madame, that I will let M. Legrand mention my hobbies. We had many common interests in Paris. You know that you were the first person who took me to one of the meetings of the Sainte Famille."

"Oh, that is another of Mdlle. Denise's enterprises at Toulon. She leads the ladies of the town a weary life with her Parisian activity. Our Provençales are rather inclined to the *dolce far niente* of their Italian neighbors."

"Then they would suit you, George," the Count said to his son, whose pale cheeks suddenly reddened at being thus addressed in the presence of Mdlle. de la Pinede, whose dark, sparkling eyes turned upon him with an inquiring expression.

"I shall tell you one advantage you may derive from your residence in the south, my dear," the Countess said to her young friend. "The climate will still further improve your very beautiful voice. Your talent can hardly admit of improvement. Have you been singing much lately?"

"Has not she got up a choir in the Church of St. Ildegonde," M. Legrand exclaimed, "which is the admiration of the whole town? It has become the fashion to go to Vespers since Mdlle. Denise has begun to play the organ and to lead the choir."

"How odious it is," Denise exclaimed, "to think of fashion having anything to do with the worship of God!"

"Better that it should be the fashion to go to church than to stay away, my dear," Madame de Vedelles said.

"Ah," Denise rejoined, "I suppose you think like the English poet who said that there are some 'who come to scoff and who remain to pray.'"

George's eyes seemed to grow more eloquent every moment as he listened to this conversation, and it was like awaking from a pleasant dream to be asked by his father to go to his study and fetch from it some papers relating to the personal property and the recent purchases connected with the chateau and the estate, which he wished to examine with M. Legrand.

He at once left the room; but on his way upstairs entirely forgot what he had been sent to do, passed absently before the door of the study, went into his own room, walked up and down for a few minutes, and then leaning against the window, fell into a fit of deep musing.

Meanwhile Jacques, who had been out, came in a short time afterwards, and M. de Vedelles presented him to the young heiress with a feeling of conscious pride. The way in which he spoke of Jacques as "my son," made her ask, "Is the young man who was here a moment ago also your son?"

"Yes; my youngest son," the Count answered, "an overgrown school-boy, without any manners or conversation. He is so shy that I was afraid of introducing him to you. By-the-bye," he added, turning to Jacques, "do go and see what he is about. I sent him half an hour ago to my study for some papers. I dare say he is quite puzzled to find them. He has no head for anything."

"He is not in the study," Jacques answered; "I saw him, as I came in, at the window of his room, staring, as usual, at the view. I called to him, but he did not answer, and disappeared."

"Go and tell him," the Countess said in a whisper, "to be sure to be in time for dinner. Mdlle. de la Pinede and her guardian will stay and dine with us."

Jacques went to give his brother this message, and then came back and tried to make himself agreeable to his mother's young guest. He evidently was as much struck with her as George. Nothing could be more opposite in looks, in character, and in but his admiration was evinced in quite a different manner. Manner than M. de Vedelles' sons. Jacques was eight years older than George, and most people would have said much the handsomest of the two.

The de Vedelles were originally of Norman extraction, and he had all the distinctive characteristics of his father's family. Strong, tall, fair-haired, with a fine complexion and white teeth, he presented a perfect type of the manly beauty of the race to which he belonged, whereas George resembled his mother, who was a creole of the isle of Cuba.

Jacques new perfectly well how to set himself off to the best advantage, both as to dress and as to manner. He had talents and cleverness, and made the most of them. A general favorite wherever he went, his confidence in his powers of pleasing was very great, but not offensively displayed. With considerable quickness he discerned that the light and chaffing tone which was habitual to him when conversing with young ladies would not suit Mdlle. de la Pinede, and without conscious hypocrisy or affectation, he talked of things he thought likely to interest her, and gave it to be understood that he might be induced even to take—some day—a practical interest in many subjects he had hitherto little studied.

George scarcely opened his lips before or after dinner. He had made, under old Vincent's superintendence, a rather unsuccessful attempt at dressing for the occasion: submitted to have his hair brushed in a fashionable manner, and put on a white waistcoat and a coat and trousers which showed him to have grown considerably since those garments had been made. His attire was not in keeping with his style or looks, and his excessive shyness made him awkward and almost ridiculous, so that Denise easily accepted the disparaging description his father had given of him, and concluded that his mind was as deficient as his manners were strange.

Still she seemed interested about him, and as she talked with his brother, often turned towards him, and tried to make him join in the conversation. But whenever she addressed a question to the poor youth, he looked so distressed that at last she thought it kinder not to speak to him.

When the meal was over, and coffee had been served on the terrace, M. de Vedelles and M. Legrand retired to discuss matters of business, and Madame de Vedelles and Mdlle. de la Pinede, by the Count's desire, went over the house for the purpose of marking out the pictures and the articles of furniture which the latter was entitled to claim.

The Countess was not clever or observant, but full of sweet-

ness and kindness. Her gentle sympathy softened what she felt must be a painful task to the orphan girl, who went through it in a calm, deliberate manner, as a matter of duty, but, except when she came upon pictures of her parents or her mother's own work-box, showed little care or emotion. She consulted a list in her hand, drawn up by her father, and verified its accuracy.

When they returned to the drawing-room, she took Madame de Vedelles' hand in hers, and said:

"My dear Countess, I am going to make rather a strange request. You have always been so kind to me, coming to see me at the *Sacre Cœur*, and to-day you have been so full of tenderness and sympathy that I feel I may look upon you as a friend. Might I ask you to leave all these things with you? I don't want to take them away; I should like them to be here—to remain here."

"We will keep them as long as you like for you, dear Denise. I dare say it will be more convenient for you not to remove them till you have a house of your own."

"That is not what I mean. I should always like to think of them as being here. I have some of my dear father's feeling about this place. In my heart and thoughts it will be always sacred to the memory of my parents. What they looked upon, what they touched, what they used, had better be here than elsewhere."

The young girl hid her face in her hands, and gave way to a burst of tears. Madame de Vedelles gently stroked her hand, and for a few minutes did not speak. Many rapid thoughts passed through her mind.

"Why did she sell the place as she cares for it so much? Does she now regret that she did so? What a strange idea to want to leave all those souvenirs here! Dear me! I wonder! Such things have, they say, happened as— Jacques is so handsome, so pleasing. Has it occurred to her as a possibility? What a perfect thing it would be for both of them! She is going to stay some time at Toulon. How glad I should be."

"Forgive me for being so foolish," Denise said. "I do not often shed tears, and now it is all over."

She raised her head, and there was a sweet and beautiful smile on her face—so full of peace and serenity, that Madame de Vedelles felt surprised at the sudden change.

"Will you do what I asked you?" Denise said.

"I must speak to my husband first; but I think I can answer for him that he will agree to keep these things as long as ever you wish them to stay here, and to send them to you whenever you claim them."

"I shall never claim them," Denise said in a tone of such decision that Madame de Vedelles could only say:

"At any rate, they will always be at your disposal. By the way, there is a box I must also show you."

"George," she said, for at that moment she saw her youngest son on the terrace, sitting on the parapet with his dog, and watching his mother and Denise as they sat in the drawing-room. "George, go up to the lumber-room, and bring here a box on which you will see written, 'Mlle. de la Pinede's toys.'"

George disappeared, and brought back that very box which had for so many years stood on the coach near which Madame de Vedelles and Denise were sitting. He laid it on the table, removed the lid, and took out of it the little sheep with their pink collars, the wooden animals, the hunters and shepherdesses, and spread them before Denise, who took them in her hand, one by one, sighed, then smiled, and said:

"Yes; how well I remember them. They were the delight of my childhood. I often asked my poor father for them. It was those little sheep I was so fond of. He used to buy me all the most wonderful toys that could be found in Paris; but I never had any just like these." After looking at them a little while she said, "I suppose there are some poor little children in the neighborhood whom you could make happy, dear Countess, by giving them my dear old toys?"

"May I have them?" George eagerly said.

Denise laughed, but Madame de Vedelles looked vexed.

ends, you will give to people the idea that you are a grown-up baby."

"I don't care what people think," George said. "Mademoiselle, may I have these things?"

Denise laughed, and said, "Yes, if you can reconcile it to your conscience to deprive the poor children of that boxful of happiness."

"I will go to Toulon, and buy a cartload of toys for all the little beggars round La Pinede, and then, I suppose, I may keep this boxful of happiness?"

Those last words were said with a sort of emotion that did not escape Denise's notice.

"What a strange youth that is," she thought.

Jacques reappeared just then, and, till the visitors departed, devoted himself to Mlle. de la Pinede, and flattered himself, when she drove off, that she had found him very agreeable. He asked leave to call on her aunt when—as was often the case—he was at Toulon. She answered civilly, and took an affectionate leave of the Countess.

Madame de Vedelles told her husband of Denise's strange wish to leave all her souvenirs and family pictures at La Pinede, and confided to him the idea that had passed through her mind.

"Well, my dear wife," the Count answered, "bring that about if you can. Nothing would help on better Jacques' election or his prospects in life than to marry this beautiful heiress; so I give you full leave to promote this most desirable result. But believe my experience! Hurry it on slowly. Girls with beauty and fortune require to be carefully dealt with, and he must make his way with her himself before we sound M. Legrand on the subject. I suspect the young lady is like you, my dear wife, devout and clerical; Jacques—bad fellow that he is, and more or less Voltairian—"

"Do not say that, my dear husband. It makes me so miserable."

"If you succeed in marrying him to Mlle. de la Pinede, she will convert him. I never saw a woman who gave me, at first sight, so much the idea of strength of character. Depend upon it, she will influence all those she has to do with."

"Thank God for that. It will always be in a right direction," and the poor mother began to pray that night for the success of the scheme she had so fondly devised.

Before retiring to her room, she had ascertained from Jacques that he thought Mlle. de la Pinede wonderfully handsome, and refrained, with difficulty, from hinting at her hopes. Before wishing him good night, she said:

"I was so grieved at dear George's asking Denise to give him her old playthings. It made me feel quite uncomfortable. I am glad his father was not in the room."

CHAPTER V.

MISE MEDE.

LEAVING for awhile the de Vedelles occupied each with his or her own private cogitations relative to the visit of the beautiful Denise, we shall follow M. Lescalle and his wife and daughter to a country house called "*Les Capucins*," which belonged to an aunt of his, with whom they were going to spend the rest of the day.

This aunt was a maiden lady, who had been given the rather affected name of Mesdelices, but in the familiar Provençal patois, was called by everybody *Mise*, that is Madame Mede.

Mlle. Lescalle's youth had witnessed the stormy scenes of the first revolution. When, under the empire, order was re-established, and property resumed its rights, she found herself in possession of a valuable little estate, and, though somewhat advanced in age, received many a proposal of marriage. The old Baron de Croixfonds compromised his ancestral dignity so far as to solicit the hand of *Mise Mede*, but his and every other offer

to know that at her age it was only her fortune that attracted suitors, and independently of other reasons this would have been enough to determine her to remain single.

Young Lescalle, her nephew, was, at that time, in Paris, studying for the bar. He had often recourse to Aunt Mede's purse when his extravagant love of amusement and expense involved him in pecuniary difficulties. After a few years' residence in Paris, young Lescalle found himself provided, indeed, with diplomas, but with no means of existence but his own talents which he was intelligent enough not to rate very highly.

Such being the case he gladly accepted his aunt's offer to purchase for him an attorney's office in his native town. From that moment Toussaint Lescalle entirely changed his habits of life: he married, and became steady and hard-working—the dissipated students of the *Ecole de Droit* was transformed into a respectable man of business, and was very severe upon those who ventured to live as he had done in past days. It was rather amusing to hear him find fault with *Mise Mede* for her charitable indulgence towards people who fell into distress through their own extravagance.

In 1819, the birth of Rose gave *Mdlle. Lescalle* a feeling of intense happiness. When she looked at the helpless little creature, just come into the world, all the tenderness and depth of feeling in her nature was called forth; all that sort of motherly affection which is dormant in many a woman's heart and is ready to spend itself in its rich abundance on some object near and dear to it, which Providence, sometimes late in life, places in its way.

Holding the baby in her arms, she hastened to her nephew's room, and said: "Toussaint, if you feel any gratitude at all for the affection I have always shown you, do grant me what I am going to ask."

"What is it, dear old aunt? There is nothing I would not do for you."

"Let me bring up your little girl."

"What! would you really wish that, aunty?"

"Yes; I want to take her and her nurse to The Capucins. You and your wife could come and see her as often as you liked. Do let me have her, my dear nephew; I have set my heart upon it."

"This is a very sudden thought, Aunt Mede: you never said anything about it before. How came you to think of it now?"

"When I saw her, and kissed her, I understood for the first time the deep love one can have for a little child. It was quite a new emotion; and then the thought came into my mind that you would let me take charge of her."

M. Lescalle rapidly resolved in his mind the merits of this proposal, and then said, "Well, for my part Aunt Mede, I see no objection to what you wish. The child will be better off with you than with any one else, that I am sure of. If you can settle it with my wife, you can rely on my consent."

Madame Lescalle did not long resist the earnest entreaties of her husband's aunt, and *Mise Mede* carried off the baby in triumph to her country house.

From that moment her life, which had been so long a solitary one, underwent a great change. She loved little Rose with an intense affection, which filled her heart with overflowing delight. She was her joy, her thought, her care of every instant; and that large rambling house, which had been before so silent and so still, was soon enlivened by the sound of childish laughter and the pattering of infant feet.

Mise Mede's country house had formerly been the ancient and famous Convent of the Capuchins of La Ciotat. It was built on a slanting part of a beach, beneath which the waves of the Mediterranean were continually breaking against a belt of small rocks, just rising above the surface of the water. The situation was beautiful, and the terrace and the garden looked on a magnificent view of the coast on both sides, and on an unlimited expanse of deep blue sea.

This spot had been well chosen for a convent. We never feel so strongly God's greatness and our own littleness as when we gaze on the boundless sky and the fathomless ocean.

It was in this delightful spot, in the midst of the loveliest

works of nature, and under the loving and fostering care of her great aunt, that Rose spent the time of her childhood. In her eleventh year, *M. Lescalle* decided that she was to go to school.

Mise Mede wept in silence for some days, but did not try to persuade her nephew to alter his intention. In her deep humility, she thought herself unequal to the task of educating Rose, and though she would never have volunteered to part with her, when her parents spoke of it, she submitted to it with silent anguish.

M. Lescalle made a mistake in proposing, and *Mise Mede* acquiescing in this measure. If he had possessed a wiser judgment and a warmer heart, if she had not been deceived by her saintly ignorance of her own merits, they would not have thought it an advantage for Rose. The society of one so holy and so sensible as her old aunt, the knowledge derived from her experience in life—a life which, like so many of those which began during the terrible period of the first French revolution, had gained from an early acquaintance with suffering and persecution a peculiar strength and generosity—would have been a far higher and better training for a young girl than that of a boarding-school in a country town under the care of good and pious women, not highly educated themselves and obliged by the exigencies of parents of the middling class to attend to their pupils acquiring showy accomplishments, and a smattering of learning in preference to useful practical information.

The school where Rose spent six years was immeasurably better for her than her father's and mother's society and the influence of *Madame Lescalle's* worldly example and gossiping acquaintances but it was as decidedly inferior to what she would have gained in daily intercourse with her Aunt Mede, as were the straight alleys and high walls of the convent play-ground to the glorious expanse and lovely views of the old Capucin monastery.

But it was not to be expected that *M. Lescalle* would understand this and so his daughter had to learn the elements of various sciences in dull abridgments, and to tire her little fingers by running endless scales on the yellow keys of a consumptive piano forte.

When she came home, Rose Lescalle had made a good first communion, and since that time had kept up habits of piety which in her father's house would certainly not have been the case. But it may be doubted whether she knew as much of solid virtue and real religion as when she had left The Capucins, or was prepared to encounter the dangers of the world she was entering upon, as if during those years when the mind receives its strongest impress, she had been under the wing of *Mise Mede*. The society of her school-fellows had not tended to elevate her tone of mind, or improve her character.

The calm, good sense of the old lady made her perceive it at once but she also saw that Rose was an innocent and loving child, and that no real harm was done. The good nuns, in spite of the unfavorable effects of association with girls some of whom had been brought up in irreligious homes, had preserved her faith and maintained her in the practice of her duties. *Mdlle. Lescalle* felt, on the whole, satisfied and hopeful that she might now resume all her influence over the child of her heart.

As to Rose's parents, they were enchanted with her accomplishments. She could play a long sonata of Hertz without making a single mistake, and brought home gigantic heads of Niobe and Romulus, drawn in red chalk. She could speak a little English, not quite with what *Madame de Stael* calls the "pure insular accent," but, at any rate, what sounded like English in her father's ears, who had once been in London for two days.

It can easily be supposed that in her solitary life the least circumstance connected with Rose assumed a high importance in *Mise Mede's* eyes. So she made her nephew promise that he at any rate would call on his way back from La Pinede. She wanted to know how Rose had got through this sort of first introduction into society. Contrary to her usual habits, she felt restless all the morning, and ten times in the course of an hour looked out of the window. At last, she could not remain indoors any longer and seated herself on a stone bench in the garden.

from whence she could see the road. There she sat knitting, with a sort of feverish activity, a thick stocking for her charity bag.

Mise Mede was then about seventy years of age. She was tall, thin, and as straight as an arrow; her face rather long, her nose aquiline, her lips compressed, in consequence of the loss of her front teeth. Her features indicated a great strength of will, and would have been, perhaps, a little stern, if it had not been for the sweet expression of her large, grey, and still very beautiful eyes.

Her dress was half like that of a nun, half like that of a peasant. It consisted of a gown made of a thick, dark stuff; a round white plaited cap, and a stiffly-starched handkerchief standing out in projecting folds over her bosom.

When Madame Lescalle's wonderful bonnet appeared in the road, the old lady rose and went to meet her relatives.

"Well, Virginie," she said, "are you pleased with your visit?"

Madame Lescalle shrugged her shoulders and answered, "Madame de Vedelles was civil enough; but she is not particularly agreeable. I think she is as stiff as a poker—that woman."

"And the Count?"

"Upon my word, I hardly saw him. He just bowed to us and that was all."

"My dear," M. Toussaint put in, "the Count had to speak to me on business."

"Oh, of course; but he might have said a few words to us."

"He sent his son to make acquaintance with you."

"Oh, yes! and a charming young man he is; so handsome and tall, and conversable too, quite different from his parents."

"He is the eldest son, the only one they call—— What do they call him?" M. Lescalle asked.

"M. Jacques," Rose said.

"Ah! you remember his name, mademoiselle," Madame Lescalle laughingly remarked, and then added in a low voice to Aunt Mede, "He looked a great deal at Rose, and he said something complimentary about her complexion."

"She is not an ugly little thing," the aunt rejoined, kissing one of Rose's blooming cheeks.

"But what is far better than compliments, Aunt Mede," M. Toussaint said, "is the certainty of being employed in the entire management of the Count's affairs. He is tired of business, and means in future to leave everything to me. This will necessitate my being a great deal at La Pinede. I am going to breakfast there to-morrow. We have to talk about the lease of a farm."

"How angry the Arnoux will be," Madame Lescalle exclaimed.

"Oh! but you must not say anything about it, Virginie."

"Why not?"

"It is better M. Arnoux should suppose I go there as a friend. It will have a better effect."

"My poor dear Toussaint," Aunt Mede exclaimed, "what a foolish sort of vanity that is!"

"My dear aunt, people value us according to the value we set on ourselves. I learnt that in Paris. For one person who looks into things, five hundred take them on trust, and believe you are what you give yourself out to be."

"I do not like that principle," Aunt Mede said. "I know of a better one, I think."

"What is it, Aunt Mede?"

"It is better to be, than to seem, worthy of esteem."

"Oh! that is a fine sentence for a copy-book, Mise Mede; but those high flights do not answer in real life. Come now, you must admit that if they think me in the town on intimate terms at the chateau, it will give me a sort of prestige. If I am simply considered as the factotum of the old Count, it will not do me half so much good. Trust to me, my dear aunt. I know how to steer my little bark. It has made good way already. I am considered an influential person at the elections, and people make up to me in consequence—the Richers on the one hand, old Croixfonds on the other. I am not quite sure that the de Vedelles have not some notions of that sort too. I am rather inclined to think so; but the future will show. Now, let us go to dinner, and converse whilst we eat."

They all went into the house, and then on the terrace, where dinner was served amidst the orange trees, at the place where the view was most beautiful and extensive. To the right rose the crested walls and picturesque gateways of La Ciotat, surmounted by the roofs of the houses. Further on a high rock, called the Eagle's Beak, stood out in bold relief against the deep blue sky. To the left a beautiful range of hills enfolded the bay in which lies the port of Toulon on the foreground, exactly opposite, was the picturesque little islet called l'Ile Verte, and the sea glittering like burnished gold in the broad sunshine.

It was just at the same hour that George de Vedelles was standing at his window, absently gazing on the magnificent landscape.

"Does not the sea look beautiful from my terrace, Rosette?" Aunt Mede said to her niece. "We have taken away all the palisades which used to surround it, little one, to prevent your falling over the edge and nothing now impedes the view."

"Oh, Aunt Mede, it is indeed very beautiful," the young girl said, and then for a moment remained in silent admiration. "I never saw so bright a sunshine as that at St. Benoit, the walls were so high." And then the conversation turned again on the inhabitants of the chateau.

In the midst of Madame Lescalle's rather prosy descriptions, Mise Mede said, "But you only speak of one young man. I thought the Countess had two sons?"

"Yes, Aunt Mede," Rose answered, "there is another, the youngest son, a pale, slight, strange looking youth."

"No one pays any attention to him," Madame Lescalle rejoined. "He is a funny sort of creature—half-witted, I think. Between ourselves, people say he is a *fada*,* and I dare say they are right."

"Who says so?" M. Lescalle asked.

"Oh, I don't know—everybody. Gautier, the farmer at La Pinede, who sometimes works in the garden, and Marion the milk-woman."

"What do they know about it?"

"Marion says that as she was walking in the night to Beausset with her son, they saw a ghost, as they thought, walking by the seaside. They were dreadfully afraid at first, but as they came nearer, who should it have been but that young de Vedelles. She said something to him, but he did not answer, and walked away in another direction. She said he looked as pale as a ghost, and stared at them ever so strangely."

"How can you listen to such foolish gossiping stories, Virginie?" the notary said.

"Oh, I suppose you think, then, that there is nothing strange in a man's mooning about the beach at three o'clock in the morning, when he ought to have been in bed."

"I dare say it was some piece of nonsense. Perhaps he meant to frighten the women going to market."

"Very likely indeed; but unless a man is a *fada*, he does not play such tricks when he is no longer a school-boy."

"Perhaps if this poor young man is in the state you suppose," Aunt Mede said, "he may be restless and nervous. *Fadas* have often delicate nerves, and are bad sleepers. Did the Countess say anything about her son's health?"

"No; but I think she seemed a little ashamed of him. She looked quite distressed when he left Rose and me so suddenly."

"And the Count?"

"He did not mention him at all," M. Lescalle answered. "I do not think he likes him."

"Poor youth!" Mise Mede said; "who would care for him if his mother died?"

"Do not distress yourself about that, my dear aunt," M. Lescalle answered. "His father is very rich, and it will not be difficult to find him a wife. When a man can give his son fifteen thousand francs a year, there is no difficulty in getting some one to look after him."

"Oh, father," Rose exclaimed, "who would marry a *fada*?"

"I am quite of Rose's opinion," Mise Mede said.

"Oh, I don't know," M. Lescalle rejoined. "I dare say this

* *Fada*, in the dialect of the south of France, does not mean exactly an idiot, but a grown-up person who remains in mind and habits a child.

young gentleman would make a very good husband. A wife would do what she liked with him, and have her own way about everything."

"But, papa, this M. George is not like a child who would do all he was told. He has all sorts of strange fancies and odd obstinacies. He does not want his father to cultivate his land, because he likes the flowers of the caper-bushes. He will not let them cut down a branch that runs into his window, and he lives in a sort of lumber-room, where he keeps all sorts of strange, useless things. And he does not dress like other people, he looks so untidy, not at all like the son of a count."

"What Rose says is perfectly true," Madame Lescalle rejoined; "and moreover, he does not seem to understand when people speak to him."

"All this may be as you say, my dear," her husband observed; "but I maintain that it will be easy to find somebody who would be glad enough to marry this youth. It is pleasant to have a rich husband, and to be called La Baronne de Vedelles."

"How can you talk in that way, Toussaint?" Madame Lescalle exclaimed. "What, marry a *fada*! It is dreadful to think of. It gives me quite a horror. I had rather beg my bread than have such an idiot for my husband."

"Well, well, Madame Lescalle, do not fly into a passion. Nobody wants you to marry him."

The conversation then turned on some other subject, and after dinner Mlle de Mede's relatives took leave of her. They were all more or less thoughtful on their way back to town. M. Lescalle was turning over in his mind how he could make the most of his position at La Pinede. His wife was occupied with the idea of sending to Paris for a new gown. Rose involuntarily dwelt on the recollection of Jacques' pleasant, animated countenance, and mused on the flattering words he had said to her. She compared him in her mind with Artemon Richer de Montlouis, the *lion* of La Ciotat, and came to the conclusion that the son of the Comte de Vedelles was much better looking and more agreeable than the said Artemon; but then with a sigh she thought, "He is going back to Paris."

CHAPTER VI.

AN ACCIDENT.

SOME days after the first visit which Mlle. de la Pinede had paid to the de Vedelles, the Countess drove to Toulon to return the compliment, and to make acquaintance with Denise's aunt, a good-natured, commonplace, elderly lady, who was very fond of her niece, of her pet dogs, and her little comforts. Denise was out, and so Madame de Vedelles had an opportunity of spending an hour with Madame de Brissac, and availed herself of it by trying to find out whether there was any marriage in question for the young lady, and what were the ideas of her aunt and her guardian on the subject. If she did not succeed in obtaining any positive information about it, at any rate she satisfied herself that at present there existed no definite obstacle to the scheme which she had formed in her own mind.

Madame de Brissac said that her niece was to spend the following winter at her guardian's house in Paris, and would go out in the world, as she had done before her father's death, under the chaperonage of Madame Legrand, who had daughters of her own, and intimate connections in the Faubourg St. Germain. She had married a wealthy banker, but belonged herself to an old Legitimist family.

"She will not long remain unmarried," Madame de Vedelles ventured to say. "With her beauty, her birth, and her fortune, Mlle. de la Pinede's hand will be eagerly sought for."

"Ah, even now," Madame de Brissac said, "M. Legrand often receives proposals for her from various quarters. But after her father's death, Denise declared that for one year, at least, she wished nothing to be said to her on the subject, and neither

M. Legrand nor myself can get her to speak of her own intentions, or express an opinion as to the eligibility of any *parti* offered to her acceptance."

"Perhaps she is a little romantic, and means to make a marriage *d'inclination*," Madame de Vedelles said, "and has not yet seen the person who may please her fancy."

"It may be so. She is very reserved about everything, is Denise. She made, I believe, a promise to her father on his death-bed not to make any decision for a certain time, and meanwhile I really think she is more occupied about her little sailor boys than her suitors."

Then the conversation changed, and soon afterwards Mlle. de la Pinede came into the room. Madame de Vedelles and she had many things to talk about. Denise was much interested to hear of that lady's plans of opening a school in the village of Troistour, which was at a distance of about two miles from the chateau, and also of obtaining a second priest, who would assist the very old cure of that parish, and say mass every day in the small chapel in the grounds of La Pinede, which, like everything else in the place, had been shut up and left in utter neglect.

Denise had all the *savoir faire* and energy in practical matters which Madame de Vedelles was totally deficient in. Her co-operation in these plans was therefore singularly useful. She promised to see the vicar-general of the diocese, to write to the superior of an order which sends out religious school-mistresses, one by one, into remote and poor localities, and finally to go again herself to La Pinede to report progress and confer with the Countess, as soon as the answers reached her.

"You know there is nothing, my dear, like talking over these things together," the Countess artfully observed. "More business is done in a quarter of an hour's conversation than by twenty letters."

They were still eagerly discussing these projects when Jacques de Vedelles called for his mother, with whom he had driven into Toulon. He was presented to Madame de Brissac, and quite won that lady's heart. The advice he gave her about the proper diet for her dogs was proffered in that good humored, playful manner which had a great charm for persons of all sorts and all ages.

Charlot himself looked up into his handsome face as if he appreciated the interest evinced in his health, and Denise, seeing him so amiable and good-natured, ventured to ask him if he could recommend anything for the cure of a sick poodle she had undertaken that morning to prescribe for.

"Is he a pet of yours, mademoiselle? Could I see him?" Jacques eagerly inquired.

"He is the friend and companion," she answered, "of a poor blind man who sits on the quay, a few doors from the corner of this street, and who is in despair at his illness. I would have taken him to a veterinary surgeon, but his master could not bear to be without him even for a short time; so I promised to get some one to look at the old dog, and see what could be done for him."

"If my mother can wait a few moments I will go at once, and give master and dog the benefit of my advice. I consider myself clever at doctoring animals. At Valsec I had quite a reputation amongst our farm laborers. They said M. Jacques had a gift for curing beasts. Have you not heard them say so, mother?"

"I know that has been one of your pretensions, dear Jacques, and I will wait with pleasure whilst you do Mlle. de la Pinede's commission."

Jacques was absent about twenty minutes. When he came back he related with a great deal of fun and animation the result of his exertions. How the case had seemed to him beyond his own powers; how he had ascertained the direction of the dog-doctor, dragged him out of his den, and brought him in presence of the dejected poodle. How the very voice of the canine *Æsculapius* had raised the spirits of the patient and made him wag his tail. How he had prescribed for him a certain powder mixed with his food, and a more generous diet. And that not being quite aware, in spite of his knowledge on the subject, what constituted

generous diet for a dog, Jacques had given a piece of twenty francs to his master, and requested him to provide it.

"I assure you mademoiselle, that I left the whole party in a happy frame of mind, your Behsarius declaring that when Mdlle. Denise took anything in hand it always succeeded, and that the dog-leech was a very clever fellow, and your humble servant worthy of entering into partnership with him. Moreover, that Toupet would certainly get well, seeing he would have the bone of a good outlet to gnaw this evening. Between ourselves, my belief is that Toupet was dying of inanition, and that when you walk that way to-morrow, mademoiselle, you will find your protege perfectly restored to health."

"How very good of you M. de Vedelles, to have taken all this trouble. You must be experienced in the art of doing kindnesses, or you would not be such a proficient in it."

"Is it an art mademoiselle?"

"If not an art, a talent," Denise replied. "There are generally three or four ways of doing a kind action, and very different degrees of happiness produced according to the one we adopt."

"I had never thought of that," Madame de Vedelles said. "I never see but one way of doing things, and it is, I dare say, not the best."

"On the contrary, dear madame," Denise exclaimed. "You have a natural spirit of kindness which guides you better, I am sure, than any amount of thinking would do."

"You are right, my dear; I never think to any good purpose."

"You are mistaken there, my dear little mother," Jacques affectionately said. "You are not conscious of it, but your mind is always occupied with plans for making others happy."

He would have thought so still more if he could have read her thoughts at that moment, for as she looked at her handsome son and at the beautiful Denise talking together of the blind man and his dog, and saw his look of admiration and her apparent pleasure in listening to his playful, amusing nonsense, visions were passing before her, all tending to his happiness in this world and in the next.

Providence favored her maternal wishes, or, at least, seemed to favor them, in an unexpected manner; and being the most unselfish of human beings, she rejoiced at an event which had this result, though it involved suffering to herself.

As Jacques and she were returning that day to La Pinede, a horse harnessed to a light cart, which its master had left standing at the door of a public-house, took fright at something, ran away and dashing against their *caleche*, overturned it. Jacques escaped unhurt, and so did the driver, but Madame de Vedelles' collar bone was broken and her arm fractured.

It would be difficult to describe the consternation her husband and her sons evinced in different ways, and according to their different characters; but as intense as possible in each case.

The Countess de Vedelles was one of those persons who, without cleverness or much capacity of any sort, and apparently singularly helpless and inefficient, by dint of tenderness, gentleness, and unselfishness, had become essential to her family. As is so often the case, though always delicate in health, she never hardly had been seriously ill, and when it crossed their minds that there was reason for alarm, it struck them for the first time that life without her would be a dreary sort of thing, and that they could not bear to look such a misfortune in the face.

The old Count seemed simply bewildered, and walked twenty times over from her room, where she had been carried, to the drawing-room, unable to realize that she was not going to spend the evening opposite to him, as she had done for the last twenty-eight years. George seated himself in a corner of his mother's bed-chamber, and remained there with his eyes fixed upon her till, her moans becoming more frequent, he could stand it no longer, and snatching up his hat, rushed out of the house, threw himself down, with his face on the grass, and remained in that posture till the surgeon, whom Jacques, the only active member of the family, had instantly sent for, arrived from Ciotat, and set the injured limbs. He said the fractures were serious, but

still he hoped all would be right. However, the next day, a great deal of fever came on, and Jacques proposed to his father to send for the best doctor at Toulon. For that purpose, he wrote to Mdlle. de la Pinede, to tell her of the accident, and to beg her to despatch, as soon as possible, whomever she considered to be the ablest medical man in that town.

M. Dubois arrived as soon as could be expected, said the state of the Countess gave cause for anxiety, but that with care and skilful nursing she would recover. He recommended that they should at once procure an experienced nurse, and offered to remain himself at the chateau till she arrived.

Jacques again sent a messenger to Madame de Brissac's house with a letter, in which he implored Denise to secure, as quickly as possible, a skilful, devoted sick nurse, repeating what M. Dubois had said—that his mother's life would most likely depend on the care with which she was watched for the next few days and nights, and the quiet and presence of mind of those about her.

In a very short time, the answer to his letter was brought back. It was as follows: "M. le Comte—I know of no one in this town whom I could fully recommend to wait on your dear mother at this critical moment. We have not any *Sœurs du bon Secours* here—none but paid nurses, in whom I have little confidence. It seems presumptuous to offer myself, but M. Dubois will tell you that I am not an unskilful nurse; and I may venture to say that what care and attention can do, will not be wanting on my part. I shall start in an hour, and if my earnest prayers are heard, God will bless my efforts to be of use to one for whom I feel so much esteem and affection."

"God bless her," Jacques ejaculated; but turning to the doctor, who was in the room, he said in an anxious manner, "Mademoiselle de la Pinede—it is so kind of her—offers to come and nurse my poor mother. I do not doubt her good will, but she can have no experience."

"Has not she experience?" M. Dubois rejoined. "I am heartily glad of what you tell me. It is the very thing I could have wished. I have seen that young lady at work: a clearer head, a lighter hand, a more noiseless tread in a sick room, a more cheerful disposition I have not met with in the whole course of my practice. I can tell you that you are lucky to have found such a nurse for Madame le Comtesse, and I shall go away easier about my patient now that Mademoiselle Denise will be here."

Little had the old Count and his sons thought to have seen Mdlle. de la Pinede so soon again at the chateau, and it was strange to witness the effect her presence produced, when, scarcely an hour after her letter had reached Jacques, she arrived.

It seemed as if a mountain's weight had been lifted off the hearts of all in that house, as if they breathed more freely, and instinctively derived hope from the presence of that gentle, strong, bright-looking creature, who really seemed, so George said to himself, to be an angel sent to their assistance.

When Jacques announced to his suffering mother the arrival of Denise, and her object in coming to La Pinede, a faint color rose in her cheeks, and she said, "Thank God," with an energy which almost surprised her son. "The sight of her face did me good at once," she told the Count the next time he came into her room, after Mdlle. de la Pinede had been with her. "I had been—I am ashamed to say—fretting because my illness would prevent those two from meeting, and now it has come about that it has actually brought her under our roof. Oh, something must come of it, I am sure."

Something was hereafter to come of it, but not just what poor Madame de Vedelles expected.

"Mind," she said to her husband before he left her that afternoon, "mind that you insist upon it that she should have all her meals with you and our sons. She must not shut herself up in my sick room, and she should take a walk every day."

It was a peculiar life that began that day for the inhabitants of La Pinede, a life that was to last about three weeks, and then be

as if it had never been, except as to the traces it left in the hearts and secret thoughts of each of the de Vedelles.

Denise coming amongst them was a little like the effect produced in the drawing-room of that house when M. Lescalle had thrown open its windows, and let in air and sunshine.

The old Count had always wished for a daughter. He was—to use a French word—very *impressionable*, and though reserved and stern himself, gaiety had an irresistible charm for him. His wife had been the comfort of his life. She had taken away, as far as in her lay, every stone out of his path, smoothed his mental pillow from morning to night, studied every turn of his countenance, and reflected, in a softened and gentle form, the shades which had saddened his existence. As to his sons—of Jacques he was both proud and fond, but there had never been any intimacy between them, and he had become so early a complete man of the world, and took—even at nineteen or twenty—such a matter-of-fact view of men and things, that, in spite of his handsome face and lively manners, there was nothing really young about him, and by the time he was twenty-eight, his father often felt himself, in some respects, the more youthful of the two. He looked up to Jacques for advice in worldly matters, and leaned upon him in all that had to do with the practical side of life.

George, as we have already said, was several years younger than his brother. The Count and his wife had always longed to have a second child, and though they would have liked better to have had a girl, his birth gave them great delight. As a little child, he had been delicate in health, and his mother, in consequence, had spoiled him, which made his father send him to school very early. He got on there extremely well, and made great progress in his studies. When he was about twelve years old, Madame de Vedelles' father died in the island of Cuba, and it became necessary for her and her husband to go and look after the property which she inherited. They were to have been absent for fifteen months, but a law-suit with the Spanish government detained them there five years. During all that time, the letters they received from France spoke of George's success at his college examinations, and the prizes he won on every occasion.

His masters always spoke of his excellent abilities and wonderful facility in learning. His parents were joyfully anticipating that at the time of their return, after those long five years of absence, he would be preparing for his examination at the polytechnic school, and that they would arrive in time to enjoy the brilliant success with which he was sure to pass it. But just as they landed at Brest, in all the happy confidence that such would be the case, they found a letter, which informed them that George, exhausted by mental anxiety, superadded to the strain of the last few months' intense study, had been seized with a brain fever, and was lying between life and death, the delicate organization he had inherited from his mother had given way under this fierce pressure.

The unhappy parents rushed into a post-chaise, and in forty hours were sitting by the bedside of their dying and unconscious son. For many days the case seemed utterly hopeless, and the eminent physicians who attended him said his recovery would be little short of a miracle. However unexpectedly, he did recover; but remained in a state of prostration, both of body and mind, so weak, that for months he could hardly stand or walk a step, and sunk into such apathy that nothing could rouse or interest him. The doctors predicted that his convalescence would be slow, but that all would be right in time; what he required, they said, was absolute rest and country air.

M. de Vedelles settled at his own place, Valsec, in Lorraine, and with aching hearts the afflicted parents brought home the pale, languid, listless youth, for whom they had anticipated such a brilliant career. By very slow degrees, the bracing air, sitting out in the garden, and then riding, improved George's health, and his physical strength gradually returned; but the moral apathy remained the same. He was either incapable of the slightest mental exertion or unwilling to make it, and it became very difficult to say whether the condition of his brain

really precluded work of any kind or whether a morbid discouragement had taken possession of him. He complained of frequent headache, was sensitively susceptible of the changes in the weather, irritably impatient of noise, wayward in temper, and inert in mood.

He had been spoilt as a child, and spoilt at school, by the perfect facility with which he had carried everything before him, and mastered, without effort, what to others were difficulties. His mother watched him with anxious affection, but she had no discernment of character, and never saw what was not obvious. His father at first kept observing every turn of his countenance, listened to each word he uttered, and devoted himself to him with a restless solicitude. But when nearly three years had elapsed and no change took place, he could hardly restrain the irritability and annoyance he felt at George's prolonged apathy and entire idleness, especially when his bodily health returned and he was able to ride for hours, and take long walks all over the country with or without a gun on his shoulder.

There was no doubt that George was by nature indolent, absent, and careless about many things. These defects had of course increased to an extraordinary degree since his illness. What had been looked upon as mere originality in the bright and clever boy of twelve, became intolerable in his father's eyes in the lazy, incapable, and in moments of bitterness the Count internally added, the half-witted youth, whom he was ashamed of, and whose actual condition so painfully contrasted with the bright promise of his childhood.

The more irritable his father became, the more plainly he showed a sort of aversion to him, the more George's silence, reserve, and apparent indifference to everything increased. Nothing provoked the Count so much as to see him sitting for hours gazing on the sea, or at the clouds, or in the evening at the stars, or if there was a fire in the room at the blazing faggots and the sparks they emitted.

He had a habit of scribbling on fragments of paper, and then tearing them up and throwing them away, which provoked M. de Vedelles, but he seldom took the trouble of writing a letter. "It made his head ache," he said. Had his father been more kind, or his mother been cleverer, or had his brother in the least understood his character, this state of things could not have existed: but as it was, there seemed little hope of a change.

The domestic life of the family had thus settled into a groove which was fatal to the happiness of its members. Jacques' principal wish, in spite of his real affection for his mother, was to get away; for the others the future seemed sad enough.

It was therefore singularly refreshing to all when a new element was introduced into that home circle by Mdlle. de la Pinede's presence. The Count was charmed with his young guest. How could it have been otherwise? He saw her skilful care, her watchful nursing, her sweet serenity, working a rapid improvement in his wife. She was soon pronounced out of danger; and, as far as her health was concerned, quickly became convalescent. Her only anxiety seemed lest she should get well too soon.

It was touching to see the little artifices she had recourse to in order to keep up the idea that her life depended on Denise's care. How they all leant upon this young girl, and what a strange influence she soon possessed over that father and those two sons, so different from one another, yet each of them feeling that there was something in her nobler, purer, and higher than they had ever before known! And with all that superiority of character and mind, she was so simple, so innocently gay, so femininely attractive.

The Count had never met with a woman at all like Denise de la Pinede. He had known bad and good women, charming and disagreeable women, clever women and silly women, free-thinking women and pious women; but never one who united so much enthusiasm with so much practical good sense, one so bold and fearless in defence of all she believed and honored and loved, so uncompromising and yet so fair-minded, so just, so tolerant of difference of opinion in others, whilst so firm in her own convictions. He found pleasure in drawing her out. He

provoked argument for the sake of hearing her speak in that peculiarly musical voice which was one of her attractions, and watching the eloquent expression of her dark eyes. And then her mirth, so like the ripple of a stream, or a child's laugh, was wonderfully refreshing to the old man, who had lived so long alone with his gentle but saddened wife, whose gaiety he had crushed long ago and then unconsciously missed it, and his two sons, who for different reasons were not happy in their home. He was the most openly devoted of the three to Mdlle. de la Pinede. He walked with her up and down the terrace during the short moments she could be induced to leave the Countess' sick-room and after dinner detained her a little while in the drawing-room and made her sing to him *Le fi de la Vierge*.

Jacques rapidly fell in love with Denise, and at the end of a week made up his mind to propose to her as soon as her stay at La Pinede came to an end. He did not much doubt that she would accept him nor did it cross his mind that the dissimilarity of their ideas and feelings would prove an obstacle. He was under the impression which at that time was prevalent in France that religion though superfluous for a man, was a sort of necessity for a woman of the better sort—for the sort of woman he should like to marry—he did not at all object to a pious wife. It did not occur to him that she would object to an unbelieving husband. He thought of her as the future young Comtesse de Vedelles, who would make a great sensation in Paris and do the honors of a *salon* where statesmen would congregate and men of letters flock. She had read a great deal, she was eloquent, she had wealthy relatives and distinguished connections. She could not imagine a more perfectly suitable *parti* for one who, like himself, had the desire and the ability to play a part in political and social life.

Denise was very amiable in her manner to him. She was naturally kind to every being that approached her—there was not a dog or a cat about the place to whom she did not say a good word as she passed by the kennel or the sunny wall on which puss was often seated. As to the children of the gardener and the shepherd, they watched for hours together in hopes that the beautiful lady who was staying at the chateau might stop before their parents' cottages, pat them on the cheek, and give them bon-bons, that necessity of life to French children.

One very bold urchin made his way one day to the terrace, and was looking up in hopes of seeing the bestower of *pralines* and *sucré de pomme* appear at a window. But instead of the face which he expected to see, a very pale and, it seemed to the child, very stern one looked down upon him, on which he began to cry and ran away. At the bottom of the stairs leading down from the terrace, he suddenly came face to face with Mdlle. de la Pinede, who sat down on the steps and took him on her knees to comfort him.

"What are you afraid of, little one?" she said, stroking his black hair with her soft white hand.

"I am afraid of the *fada*," he answered, hiding his face in her breast.

Denise was not acquainted with this Provençal word, and supposed it to mean a hobgoblin but anxious to stop the child's crying, which she was afraid Madame de Vedelles might overhear from her room, tried to lead him away. At that moment George appeared carrying in his hand the box of toys which had remained in his room since the day of Denise's first visit.

"Oh, this is very opportune," she exclaimed, and seizing on a hunter in a red coat and a sheep with a pink collar, she displayed them to the astonished eyes of little Pierre, who now looked at George with awe, but less terror than before. He evidently thought him still a very strange being, but not as evil-minded as he had supposed.

"Will you take him home, M. George," Denise said, "and let him carry away those treasures with him. But tell his parents to try and prevent his coming up to the terrace. Your father would have been very angry if he had heard him crying under the windows. I must go now to your mother."

George took the child's hand, and they walked towards the shepherd's hut. Pierre looking up at him now and then, half

afraid and half confiding. When they reached the cottage, George told Madame Lubin what Denise had said and went away. She proceeded to scold Pierre for his audacity, and the better to secure his keeping away from the awful precincts, told him that if he ever trespassed again in the neighborhood of the chateau, that gentleman who had brought him back, and who was a *fada*, would wring his neck just as she was at that moment going to do to the superannuated hen she held in her hand doomed to the *pot au feu*. After that day, Pierre's little companions, when they saw George walking on the road or on the seashore, always ran away in a fright, screaming out, "The *fada*, the *fada*!"

We have said and shown that Denise was kind to every one, and to Jacques as to everybody else. And then she spoke to him sometimes in a very earnest manner. During the hours when she had sat by Madame de Vedelles' bedside, the poor mother had spoken to her of her sorrow, that this eldest, bright, hopeful son of hers had lost the faith of his childhood, and ceased to practice his religion.

At that time in France this was, however, so commonly the case with the young men of his age, that it appeared even to a pious mother no strange thing. She had lived for thirty years with a husband indifferent to religion, and surrounded by persons holding infidel opinions. This had blunted the edge of her grief with regard to her son, though it did not efface it; but Denise whose character was stronger, whose zeal was more ardent, whose love of God was a deep, engrossing, supreme affection, could not look unmoved on what she felt to be such a great calamity, could not converse without emotion on subjects which related to the existence or the absence in a soul of that faith which was the mainspring of her whole being. So when she talked to Jacques of anything relating to it, when she watched the effect of her earnest words upon him, and like all earnest words they sometimes did affect him, there was an expression in her countenance and a thrill in her voice which—poor vain man—he ascribed to a personal feeling of interest in him. Jacques de Vedelles, not to the intense solicitude which one who has at heart the glory of God and the salvation of souls feels in every creature who is severed from the source of life and light, and the ardent desire to bring it back to a sense of its high destiny. He could not have conceived that the look of joy which beamed in her speaking eyes one day when he had uttered words which implied that he meant to think and act differently with regard to religion than he had hitherto done, could proceed from a disinterested anxiety for his salvation.

He would have believed it, perhaps, if he had ever followed Denise in the hospitals or in the homes of the poor. He would then have seen her beautiful face lighted up with the same exulting gratitude when some poor wretch, who had been cursing and blaspheming, perhaps, during the long course of a sinful and miserable life, with softened heart and tearful eyes, for the first time prayed or kissed the crucifix she held to his lips, or when a poor girl on the brink of sin and shame, saved by her tender energy, turned from the tempter and followed her to a place of safety.

It was natural he should cherish hopes founded on a mistake and indulge in anticipations which reconciled him to her departure, for he felt that it was not during her stay at La Pinede that he could propose to Denise; and that being the case, he almost longed for the day when she would return to Toulon, and he would feel at liberty to offer her his hand, which, to say the truth, he did not much doubt she would accept.

Madame de Vedelles had unconsciously contrived to excite in Denise a strong interest in both her sons: in Jacques by speaking of him, by dwelling on his good qualities, and his talents, which had already begun to display themselves at the bar, and then of that absence of faith and that sceptical spirit which enlisted against religion and the Church capabilities which, rightly directed, might have made him, the poor mother fondly thought, a Montalembert, an Ozanam, or a Berryer.

As to George, she had been profoundly silent; but what with her compassionate tone when she spoke to him, his father's ill-

disguised contempt, a few words which had been dropped by a servant, and also his absence, his oddities, and the wild, anxious expression of his eyes at times, Denise had easily come to the conclusion that the name of *Jadu*, which she had heard applied to him, meant idiot, and that the poor young man was really half-witted. Still she had her doubts; these doubts led her to seek for opportunities of conversing with him, and gradually her opinion on this point was shaken, and her curiosity strongly stimulated. Now and then George said things which astonished her by their originality and depth of thought, but he never kept up a conversation. He generally sat in a corner of the room where he could watch her unobserved, but hardly answered her questions or seemed to attend to what she said, unless they happened for a moment to be alone together, and then he was so agitated that he sometimes said incoherent things.

She felt very sorry for him and had suspicion that his relatives were altogether mistaken about this young man; but she did not venture with any of them to approach the subject. There seemed a sort of tacit agreement that in her presence George was not to be taken notice of and they never mentioned him any more than if he had not existed. He did not seem conscious of this sort of moral ostracism, and went on leading much the same life as usual, sitting sometimes by his mother's couch, gentle, silent, and abstracted, only he remained more at home, and was often on the terrace whence he could see into the drawing-room where Denise spent part of the mornings busy with Church work. She had undertaken to make the altar linen for the little chapel which was to be used for mass as soon as the arrangements with the bishop were concluded. When she read aloud, as she often did, to Madame de Vedelles, he stood hid behind the open window, listening.

Meanwhile the Countess recovered rapidly, and Denise, in spite of her entreaties that she would prolong her stay, fixed the day for her departure.

"But you will return to the opening of the chapel?"

"Perhaps, dear friend," Denise answered; "but I can make no promise."

As she looked up from her work, she saw George's eyes fixed upon her with an expression which startled her. It was one of entreaty, of deep sadness, of pathetic meaning.

"Do tell my mother that you will come back," he said in a low voice. "I have made a vow to our lady of La Garde to do for you whatever you ask me if you will promise to come back for the opening of our chapel."

"What a rash vow!" Denise said, with a smile.

"Very rash, he said; 'for I should keep it, whatever it was.'"

Denise thought a moment, and revolved in her mind the hold which that singular promise might some day give her over that singular youth, whom she could not help feeling a deep interest in, and then she said gaily: "Well, if I can, I will."

"I will means nothing," Madame de Vedelles said, laughing, "with the proviso of *if I can*."

"Would you have me promise to do something impossible?"

"Yes," George eagerly said. "I want you to do something impossible." He finished the sentence only in thought, and mentally added, "And that would be to care for me."

Denise was going away. She had been singing to the Count, for the last time, his favorite song *Al pie d'un Salice*. And then, the carriage being announced, she kissed the Countess, and was escorted to the door by M. de Vedelles and Jacques. George was nowhere to be seen.

"How like him," the Count exclaimed, "not to be here to take leave of Mlle. de la Pinede." Then he thanked Denise for all she had done for his wife, and handed her into the carriage with a strong hope in his mind that she would be one day his daughter-in-law.

The *caleche* drove away. Where the while was George? Climbing up the Sugarloaf hill, whence he could see for miles, amidst clouds of dust, that vehicle rolling along the road to Toulon.

The Count glanced at his eldest son, and saw that he looked

troubled and excited, and thought it time to break silence on the subject which he felt sure was in both their minds.

He put his hand on Jacques' shoulder, and said, "What are you thinking of, Jacques?"

"What am I thinking of? Nothing that I know of, father."

"But I do know, and I can tell you."

"What do you mean?"

"You are thinking of that charming girl who has just driven away."

"Well, I do not deny it."

"You admire her, you are in love with her?"

"I am not prepared to say no to that either."

"And what do you mean to do?"

"Well if you have no objection, I mean to propose to her."

"She would be a very suitable match for you, and she is certainly a very attractive person."

"Who are you speaking of?" asked the Countess, who had just been wheeled upon the terrace in her garden-chair.

When her attendant had withdrawn, her husband said, "Denise de la Pinede."

"And what were you saying about her?"

"Jacques wants to propose to her."

"Oh, I am so glad. And you, of course, approve of it?"

"I cannot see any objection to such a marriage: her family is just as good as ours, and she has a fortune of five hundred thousand francs."

"She is so *very* handsome," Madame de la Vedelles added, in her somewhat dejected tone of voice.

"Not too handsome, is she, mother?" Jacques said with a smile. "If you had said too religious, I might, perhaps, have been inclined to agree with you. But, no; I should not like her to be in any way different from what she is. I believe I should not have lost my heart half so quickly to her if she had not been bent on converting me."

"Oh, Jacques, you will, indeed, be a happy man if you marry Denise!"

Jacques hugged his mother, as he used to do when he was eight years old, and then his old father. Rushing into the house, he shouted, "Vincent, order my horse immediately."

"Where are you going?" asked the Count.

"To Toulon."

"Not to-day?"

"Yes, to-day. I shall sleep at the Grand Cerf, and call at Madame de Brissac's to-morrow morning. The first year of Denise's mourning for her father ends to-morrow. She will see that, out of respect for her feelings, I waited till that day to propose to her."

"Well, be off my dear boy, and God speed you on your errand," his father said, and his mother added, "God bless you, my dear son."

At about two o'clock the next day Jacques rode up the avenue, his horse in a sweat, and his clothes white with dust. He looked pale and jaded.

"What has happened?" his mother anxiously asked, as he came into the drawing-room, where she and her husband were sitting.

"Something we did not foresee, mother."

"What?"

"She has refused me."

"Refused you," Madame de Vedelles exclaimed.

"Yes, without hesitation and without agitation. I spoke of hope, and she said there was no hope. She was as calm, as kind, as decided as when the other evening she refused to sing *Gastibelza*, the song I had bought at Marseilles."

"This is a sad disappointment," Madame de Vedelles sighed, with tears in her eyes.

The Count cleared his throat, and took up the newspaper, but laying it down again, looked at his son, and in a husky voice said, "You will not break your heart about her, Jacques?"

"Oh, dear, no; I shall not die of it, nor even make a vow never to marry. I did not expect to have ever been so sentiment-

tal; but nothing cures one so quickly of that infirmity as the cold shower-bath of such an absolute and civilly gracious refusal. I shall go to Paris in a few days."

CHAPTER VII.

COMPLICATIONS.

SEVERAL days elapsed, and no one at the chateau made any allusion to Denise. Jacques found it hard work to get over his disappointment and longed for the moment of departure. George, to whom not a word had been said of what had been going on, was, as usual, silent. The old Count, almost as vexed as his son at the result of the journey to Toulon, took refuge in politics, and held long conversations with Jacques about his prospects at the approaching elections.

A request had been made to him to stand for the department, M. Cesaire de Croixfonds, who was to have done so, having apparently been unable to buy a property which would have made him eligible. This incident happened luckily at the very moment when the thoughts of father and son were particularly prepared to indulge in ambitious projects, and day after day they had gone through calculations in the morning, and in the afternoon paid visits in the neighborhood, in order to feel their ground and sound the dispositions of the electors.

The result of their investigations showed that parties were very evenly balanced, and, as the Baron de Croixfonds had also discovered, that M. Lescalle's influence, and the votes he could command, would probably turn the scale on way or the other.

"Would he be well disposed towards us?" Jacques asked his father.

"I really cannot tell. He had given the Baron de Croixfonds great hopes that he would support his son in case of his standing, but somebody said the other day that he threw him over, and is hand and glove now with the Richers de Montlouis. M. Jules Richer is the ultra Liberal candidate, you know."

"I had better call on Madame Lescalle, and try to obtain her good graces."

"I suspect that she has not much influence with her lord and master, that is to say, she rules the *menage*, but when it comes to business or politics, he is absolute."

"How can we get round him?"

"We can ask him to dinner before you go, and judge of his dispositions."

"In the meantime I shall leave my card at the Maison Lescalle. Such little attentions are never wholly unacceptable."

On the afternoon of the same day, as he was returning from La Ciotat, Jacques met his brother, and was struck with his paleness and look of more than ordinary dejection.

"Are you ill, George?" he said, in a kind manner.

"What makes you think so?"

"You don't look at all well."

"Oh, I am quite well. There is nothing the matter with me."

"I am not at all convinced of that. I have observed that for some days you have looked anything but well. You must take care of yourself, George."

"Oh! I shall take a long walk to-morrow; that does me more good than anything when——"

"When you feel ill. What is the matter with you?"

George hesitated and seemed about to answer, but he stopped, turned away, and, as if speaking to himself, said, "Oh, these last twelve days!"

Those words struck Jacques. It was just twelve days since his own unsuccessful journey to Toulon. As his brother walked away, he looked at him in a thoughtful and anxious manner, then went out himself, and for nearly an hour paced slowly up and down the avenue. At last he stopped, and, as if he was making up his mind to an effort, came back to the house and walked straight into his father's study.

The Count de Vedelles was writing, and said, without looking up, "What do you want, Jacques?"

"I want to speak to you about something which is, I think, of consequence."

"About your election?"

"No; it is about George."

"Oh, George again!" the old man said, with a look of weariness. "Well, what is it?"

"He is not well, and if we do not take care, he will get worse, both in body and mind. I suspect he spends his nights wandering about the grounds. I found out accidentally that he had not gone to bed at all the night before last."

M. de Vedelles made a gesture which meant, "Why was I not told of this before?"

"I did not speak about it, because I knew how much it must vex you, and then, as I could not imagine any reason, or think of any remedy for this increasing depression, I thought it better not to thwart his fancies. But I am getting anxious about him. He is looking very ill, he has lost his appetite, he is more silent and abstracted than ever, and sometimes his absence is so great that I can hardly rouse him from it."

"My dear Jacques, all this is not new to me. Your mother has noticed it as well as yourself, and it makes her very unhappy. But what can we do? We have tried everything we could think of to rouse him out of this apathy. I afraid there is nothing to be done. Speaking to him about his health only serves to irritate him."

"But I think I have found out the cause of this increased dejection."

"Have you? What is it?"

"He is in love."

"In love! George! Oh, then that would explain those long walks and wanderings about the country! And you have found out the secret, and know who it is he has taken a fancy to. A peasant girl, I suppose—one of the farmer's daughters?"

"No; not at all a peasant girl!"

"Some one at La Ciotat, then? That would be better. If she is a respectable girl and tolerably well connected, why really it would be no bad thing to get him married. I have often thought that as there is no hope of his entering into any profession, this would be the best thing that could happen."

"But unfortunately it is Mdlle de la Pinede he has fallen in love with."

"Denise! Nonsense! I don't believe a word of it!"

"But I am quite certain it is so. I suspected it, and just now something he said, half unconsciously, proved I am right."

"Then I don't see what is to be done. She would certainly not marry him."

"No, indeed," Jacques said, glancing at his own handsome face in the glass. "A girl who has refused me, would not, I suppose, think of marrying George. But what can we do about this poor dear boy?"

"You think much too seriously, I am sure, of this fancy of his. Well, suppose he imagines himself in love with Mdlle. Denise, it is only because she is the first pretty girl he has met and talked to. We could easily, if he has taken a sentimental turn, lead his affections in some other more possible direction. The fact is, he is bored to death. Without occupation of any sort, without interest in anything, his life here is of course dreadfully dull. He will never be able to take care of himself, and a good, sensible wife, pretty enough to please his fancy, would be the making of your brother. Do you know that this idea is quite a relief to me? Can you think of any one that would do for him? We must not be too particular. People in our own rank of life would object to marry their daughters to such a poor creature as George, considering he is no great *parti*, and will never get on in life. But what I can settle upon him, and the title of Baronne, would throw dust into the eyes of many an honest *roturier*."

Jacques reflected a moment, and then a smile hovered on his lips. "O father, what a capital stroke of policy for both your sons I have thought of."

"What are you thinking of?"

"Suppose that with one stone you could kill two 'birds.'"

"What two birds? Speak out."

"Well, you know that M. Lescalle holds the fate of the next election completely in his hands. This is the case, beyond a doubt. He has been, up to this time, playing off the Croixfonds and the Richers against one another. Now it appears that Cesaire de Croixfonds is out of the field, and the choice lies between M. Richer and me. Would not the excellent Toussaint like his pretty daughter to be madame la Baronne de Vedelles? and you would really have a very nice little daughter-in-law."

"I wonder if he would agree," the Count said, greatly excited. "Of course it would secure your election at once. The joke in the neighborhood has been that the representation of this department is a part of Mdlle. Rose's marriage portion, and we could go much farther and fare worse. The parents would be a great nuisance, but the girl is nice enough."

"She is a charming little thing. Let us lose no time about it. That gigantic swell, M. Artemon Richer de Montlouis, is said to be very much fascinated by the notary's daughter, and they may engage themselves beyond recovery if speedy measures to cut him out are not taken."

"I shall write at once to Lescalle and ask him to come here to-morrow. He wants the East Farm for a client of his, and I shall put our friend in a good humor by telling him that I have made up my mind, for his sake, to let Jean Benard have it."

"Bravo! I already see myself M. le Depute des Bouches du Rhone, and my pretty sister-in-law installed at the chateau. We shall then see, I suppose, the acacia branch cut at last. Poor, dear George! It is really a capital plan, if only he falls into it."

"Of course he will," the Count answered. "We shall have to tell him that Mdlle. Denise is as much out of his reach as the moon, and once convinced of that, he will be enchanted to fall back on the fair Rose we shall have provided for him. You had better not say anything of all this to your mother at present; she is overanxious about things."

To the disappointment of the Count and his eldest son, an answer was sent to say that M. Lescalle was absent, and not expected home for some days. Jacques put off again his departure for Paris, wishing to keep up his father to the plan they had formed, and to see the affair fairly started. In the meantime he was assiduous in his attentions to those he looked upon as his future constituents, and made himself very popular in the neighborhood.

George looked every day more sad and dejected. There had been no communication between Madame de Vedelles and Mdlle. de la Pinede since she had refused Jacques; but four or five days after the one when he had spoken to his father of George's state of mind, the Countess received a letter from Denise, inclosing one from the vicar-general, announcing that a second priest had been appointed at Les Trois Tours, and would begin saying mass every day at the chapel in the grounds of La Pinede, as soon as he received notice of M. and Madame de Vedelles' wishes on the subject. Denise had informed the vicar-general that the Countess would answer his letter herself. She added kind and affectionate expressions as to the health of Madame de Vedelles, but said nothing as to their meeting again.

The last day of the month of May was fixed upon for the opening of the chapel. It was to be a very simple function. There had been plans for the formation of a choir under Denise's direction, and the music for the occasion had been chosen during her stay at La Pinede. But all this having fallen to the ground since her departure and the unfortunate result of Jacques' visit on the following day, there was now to be only a low mass at eight o'clock in the morning. A box containing all the things she had worked for the altar, and another with all those she had ordered, at Madame de Vedelles' request, from a shop at Marseilles, arrived the day before that of the opening.

George seemed excited at the sight of these cases, and when his mother went to the chapel to see them unpacked and arranged, and to meet the young priest from Les Trois Tours, he followed her there, and exerted himself more than he had done

about anything since his illness, in helping to ornament the altar.

On the following morning Madame de Vedelles, in her Bath chair, and her husband and her eldest son on foot crossed the garden and entered the chapel. The Count went because it would not have looked well in the eyes of his servants and tenants if he had not done so; Jacques, because he did not like to vex his mother by staying away. George had preceded the rest of the family, and when they arrived was sitting on one of the benches with his head leaning on his hands. When mass began he knelt, but otherwise remained in the same position. Once, just after the elevation, he raised his head, and then, in a little tribune on one side of the chapel, which was reached by a side entrance, he caught sight of a face which at that moment, and to his excited imagination, seemed a heavenly vision. The expression of devotion in that upturned countenance was more holy, more beautiful than anything he had ever seen or dreamed of.

It was the face indeed which, from the first moment he had beheld it, he had thought the most perfect ideal of pure, high, and lofty womanly beauty. But never had it seemed to him, during those many hours he had watched it, not even when it bent in gentle sweetness over his mother's sick couch, half so beautiful or so angel-like as now, in the attitude of ardent prayer and adoring love. So holy was its look that it impressed him with a feeling of awe. He dared not continue to gaze upon it in that Sacred Presence he had always believed in, but which that expression of fervent adoration seemed to impress upon him more vividly than ever. He again covered his face with his hands, a mute, silent, instinctive prayer rose from his heart, which softened the dull, aching pain so long felt and never spoken of.

When mass was nearly over he glanced again at the tribune, but it was empty, and he asked himself if he had imagined or seen a vision, whether Denise had really been in that spot a moment ago, or if it had been a mere illusion.

He walked home like a person in a dream, and never uttered a single word during breakfast-time, and when his father and his brother had left the room, sat opposite to his mother, still plunged in a deep fit of musing.

"George," she gently said. "I have a message to give you."

"A message?" he said. "I cannot think who can have any message to send to me."

"I have just been given a letter from Mdlle. de la Pinede."

A hectic red spot rose on George's pale cheeks.

"She was in the chapel this morning. She says that she had promised us to be present at the first mass that should be said there, and that, though at present, it is better for all parties that she should not come here, and of course it is, she felt that she must keep her word, and that with all her heart she united her prayers with ours; and then she adds, 'Will you tell M. George that I kept my promise, and that I may some day claim the fulfilment of his.'"

"Mother, what does it all mean?" George exclaimed, starting to his feet. "What has happened? What is changed? Why does she stay away?"

Madame de Vedelles hesitated a moment, and then thought it better to let him know the truth.

"My dear boy, if you had not been so absent, so unobservant, you would have guessed what has taken place. Your brother fell in love with Mdlle. de la Pinede, and the day after she left us went to Toulon and proposed to her. I am sorry to say that she refused him. It was a great disappointment to him and to us."

"Jacques? She refused him? Thank God!" he added in so low a voice that his mother did not hear those last words.

"And she has sent me that message. She remembers my vow."

He darted out of the room, and rushed through the olive woods to the sea-shore. His head was aching with excitement, and during the rest of the day he could only sit with his forehead resting on his hands, or walk up and down the beach, re-

peating to himself; "She has refused Jacques. She has sent me that message."

It was a day or two after the opening of the chapel that M. Lescalle came back to La Ciotat, and he lost no time in obeying the Count's summons which he found on his arrival. But between that arrival and his visit to the chateau, short as the interval had been, something had happened which made him look singularly radiant. Pleasant thoughts were evidently in his mind, and he kept rubbing his fat hands together every five minutes, as if to relieve the overflowing exuberance of his spirits.

The fact was, that an hour after his return he had received a visit from M. Richer de Montlouis, the father of M. Artemon, and that after a few preliminary remarks that gentleman had said to him—

"M. Lescalle, my object in calling upon you is an important one. I come to ask your daughter's hand in marriage for my son Artemon."

The notary rather expected this proposal, but he thought it right to appear surprised.

"How comes it," he said, "that such an honor is done to us by the first family in the town?"

For the best reason possible in such a case, M. Lescalle. Artemon could not meet your lovely daughter and remain indifferent to her great attractions. She has made the deepest impression on my son's heart, and you will make him the happiest of men if you accept him as a son-in-law."

"Rose is very young, M. de Montlouis."

"That is a defect which will always go on diminishing," the banker said, with a broad smile.

"I am afraid the fortune I can give her will seem to you very small."

"You give her——"

"Forty thousand francs."

"I have been told sixty thousand francs."

"No. M. de Montlouis, forty thousand; and I assure you that even that is almost beyond my means."

"Well, you will perhaps reconsider the matter before we finally fix the sum, my dear M. Lescalle. I do not want you to give me a positive answer at once, not to-day I mean. You must wish, of course, to consult Madame Lescalle, only I flatter myself that if you are friendly to us there will be no difficulties in the way."

"You have no doubt, I hope, of my friendly feelings?"

"Well, well, my dear M. Lescalle, you have not always been our friend."

"What do you mean, my dear sir?"

"Come, let us speak openly. We are on the eve of an election. My brother is going to stand, and you know that you promised to support M. Cesaïre de Croixfonds."

"Ah! I thought as much," inwardly ejaculated the notary. "The election is at the bottom of the marriage, to a great degree, at any rate."

"What I promised," he answered, "was to help M. de Croixfonds to qualify himself by the purchase of an estate in this part of the country."

"Yes, exactly so, to set up another candidate. Thanks to your good offices, he was very near purchasing La Pinede for a song."

"I acted as his lawyer and a friend of his family. I have no wish to injure your brother's position."

"But if we come to an agreement regarding this proposal I have just made to you, I suppose that in the event of any one else standing we can reckon on your support?"

"I am not pledged to any one else."

"Then I can solicit your votes for my son's uncle. On another occasion you will give them of your own accord to your son-in-law."

"What does your son intend?"

"Artemon has no settled plans of the kind; but seeing that for the last ten years he has set his face against marriage, and now

his career. I am sure that as a married man he will be a model of steadiness."

"It is never too late to mend, certainly; but I suppose there is room for improvement," M. Lescalle said.

"Oh, of course, he has been a little wild, like all young men. There is no harm in that. He has sown his wild oats. You were just as unsteady once, and only think what an excellent husband you have made."

M. Lescalle did not much like this allusion to his past life; but as it was a home thrust that could not well be parried, he thought it best to drop the subject, and the two gentlemen parted on the most cordial terms.

As soon as M. de Montlouis was gone, M. Lescalle rushed to his wife's room.

"Virginie," he said, "we are going to marry Rose."

"To Artemon Richer?"

"Then it is no surprise to you?"

"I saw his father going into your office, and I immediately guessed what he was come about. I knew it would end in that way."

"I suspect that their anxiety about the election and securing my votes hurried on the proposal. I shall not think of giving them more than forty thousand francs with Rose; it is quite enough, considering that it will be my doing if M. Jules Richer is elected."

"Oh, certainly, it is quite enough, and Rose such a pretty girl, too, in the bargain."

"Very pretty, no doubt; but I can tell you, Madame Lescalle, that her blue eyes would not have made up for the loss of twenty thousand francs, if it had not been for the votes I can command."

"Artemon is very much in love with her."

"So much the better. And Rose—has she seen him?"

"I don't know; I have looked after her very closely. M. Artemon is apt to flirt with young ladies, and I was determined that nothing of the sort should go on till he had proposed."

"You were quite right, but now you can speak to Rose. Do you think she will be pleased?"

"I should fancy so, indeed—such a tall, handsome fellow, and so admired by everybody. There she is, Toussaint, just come back from Les Capucins. She has spent the morning with Aunt Mede. Leave us together. I shall speak to her at once. It would be too formal if you were in the room."

"Very well," M. Lescalle answered, and away he went to his office.

A moment afterwards Rose came into her mother's room. She looked like one of Greuze's pictures in her large straw hat, ornamented with a wreath of wild flowers; her pretty soft hands and arms holding up the skirt of her pink gingham frock, which enabled her to carry an immense bunch of flowers gathered in Mise Mede's garden. With her fair hair hanging about her face, the color in her cheeks deeper still than usual after her walk, and that harvest of roses, no painter could have sketched a more perfect image of spring. Breathless and smiling, she ran up to her mother and kissed her.

"See, mamma, what lovely flowers! I have ransacked Mise Mede's *parterre*."

"They are beautiful," Madame Lescalle answered, glancing at the roses; "but I am not thinking of nosegays now. Can you guess what I have heard?"

"No; what is it, mamma?"

"Some one has proposed for you, my dear."

"For me—really? Who, mamma?"

"Can you guess?"

"No, mamma," Rose answered, opening very wide her large blue, innocent-looking eyes.

"Well, Artemon Richer de Montlouis wishes to marry you."

Rose's countenance changed, her hands loosened their hold of her gown, and all her flowers fell at her feet.

"You said the other day, mamma, that I was too young to be married."

"Are you speaking quite in earnest about it, mamma?"

"Oh, yes, my dear, as earnestly as possible."

"But, mamma, you did say, the day before yesterday, that I was a great deal too young to be married."

"Oh, that is what one always says when there is nothing actually in question about a girl's marriage, and no one has yet proposed for her; but people do not throw away the chance of a good match on the score of a person's youth. You are very difficult to please if you are not delighted with this proposal. Artemon Richer is the best *parti* and the handsomest man in this place."

Rose said nothing. She knew her mother's partiality for the handsome Artemon, and felt that nothing she could say would be understood. She sat silently listening to Madame Lescalle's comments on her extraordinary good luck till some visitors were announced; then hastily rising, she threw hat, covered with flowers, into a corner, and went straight to her father's study. She found him seated at his bureau, with his head on his hand. He was calculating all the advantages he expected to derive from a connection with the Richers de Montlouis.

Rose tried to steady her voice, and said, "Dear papa, mamma has just told me——"

"Oh, indeed! So you have heard, little girl, of the conquest you have made. Well, it is of some use to be pretty."

"And so M. Artemon——"

"Will be your husband, little lady, in three weeks."

"Not so soon as that, papa, I hope. I don't know him at all."

"Well, I know him, my dear, and that is quite enough. You and he will have plenty of time to get acquainted when you are married. But you have seen him; you know what a good-looking fellow he is. That will do for the present, and I suppose he admires my little Rose as he has proposed for her."

"Perhaps it is his father who wants him to marry me."

"Oh, dear, no. Rosette; a man of thirty is not like a girl of seventeen."

Rose sighed deeply, and her father went on saying: "I would not on any account have forced upon my daughter a disagreeable husband; and if Artemon had not been good-looking and young, rich and well-connected, if he had not been just the sort of man a girl would like to marry, I should not have accepted him for my little Rose; but this match is everything I could desire. What! are you not delighted, my love? Why don't you thank your papa and kiss him, instead of standing there looking as doleful as if you were not the luckiest of girls?"

"I am so surprised, papa, and I really hardly know if I am awake or dreaming. The idea of my being married seems so strange—and so soon, too! I had never thought about it at all."

"It is much better to be taken by surprise, I can tell you, than to be ten years looking out for a husband, as the *Demoiselles Arnoux* have done, and end by not finding one and being an old maid. I can understand your surprise, Rosette; but after Artemon's first visit you will be enchanted."

"Oh no, papa, I am sure I shall not like him;" and in saying this Rose, who had been struggling for some time with her tears, hid her face in her hands, and began to sob.

"What is all this nonsense?" M. Lescalle sternly said. "Are we going to play the fool and turn our back on the best match in the neighborhood? Oh, I see how it is. We dreamed at school of some fine fairy prince, and we mean to wait for him."

This sort of banter Rose could not stand. All she had meant to say went out of her head. She felt herself helpless against what she felt would be her father's invincible will, and her courage gave way. She rushed out of the study and locked herself up in her room, without listening to her father's consoling assurance that she was to leave it to him, and that he knew much better than herself what would be for her happiness.

As might well have been expected, Rose's tears did not in the least affect his plans. He did not make her girlish objections even a subject of thought; and as he went the next day to La

Pinede, Toussaint Lescalle felt in a most agreeable frame of mind.

Any one who had seen him walking slowly, with his hands behind his back, enjoying the pleasant breeze from the sea and the perfume of the wild thyme, and had observed the affable way in which he nodded to the persons he met, smiled on the children, and called the dogs by familiar names, would have said, "There goes a happy individual." And what was giving such joy to that man, that it seemed to ooze out of every pore of his comfortable plump body, and to glitter in his little sharp eyes?

Well, he had an only child—a lovely, innocent girl, full of the gaiety which is so attractive at that age. He had her in his home, under his roof, near him from morning to night, like a bird in spirits, like a flower in beauty and sweetness; and what made him so very happy was that he was going to get rid of her.

Was he on that account a hard-hearted man or a bad father? By no means. He was like an innumerable number of fathers. In many families a daughter is considered as an inconvenience. If she marries at eighteen it is a good thing: if at sixteen or seventeen, still better. To see her unhappy in her husband's house is much less of an annoyance than to have her happy at home unmarried.

CHAPTER VIII.

SECOND THOUGHTS.

M. DE VEDELLES was immediately struck with his visitor's beaming expression of countenance, and something in it which seemed to provoke an interrogatory remark.

After requesting him to be seated, the Count said, "You seem in excellent spirits this morning, M. Lescalle?"

"Ah, well! I am not at all apt to be melancholy, M. le Comte, and I have indeed no reason to complain. Things are not going badly with me, as times go."

"Your business is increasing very much, I hear."

"It increases every day, and I have clients in every corner of the department."

"Yes; your acquaintance must be very extensive. I suppose you know most of the families in this neighborhood?"

"A great many of them—not to say all."

"You saw by my letter, that I will agree to let the East Farm, at his own terms, to your protegee, Jean Benard."

"Indeed I did, M. le Comte, and I am delighted to find that you have arrived at this decision. I have known Benard for twenty years, and I can assure you that he is a good sort of a man, and a good farmer too. He will do justice to your land."

"I am always inclined to take your advice on such matters, because you have so much knowledge of business, and are especially conversant with questions of land in this locality, of which I am myself quite ignorant."

"Without boasting, I may say, M. le Comte, that few men have applied themselves with as much attention as I have done to all the details regarding the management of property in this part of the country."

"But I suspect, M. Lescalle, that you are not only experienced in matters of this description, but that you have a pretty quick eye as to all sorts of affairs, and that you could give me judicious advice on a very delicate matter."

"Well, M. le Comte, I will not deny that I am often consulted by my neighbors on subjects which require considerable tact and discretion."

"That is just what I meant. You are a person to whom one can speak quite confidentially."

"I always go on the principle that a notary is a sort of lay confessor."

"I felt sure that was the case, and I am going to speak to you with entire confidence. You know that I have two sons?"

"Yes; though I only know M. Jacques—a very charming young man in every respect."

"He is also remarkably clever, and has already distinguished

himself at the bar. They are trying at Marseilles to persuade him to give up Paris and remain in Provence. He is thinking of engaging in political life, and I have no fears as to his not making his way in the world; but it is not the same case with his brother."

"You are alluding to M. George?"

"Yes."

"He is still very young?"

"Not so young as he looks. He will be twenty-one in a few days. He was, till the age of seventeen, one of the most promising boys imaginable—full of intelligence, and even, apparently, very talented."

"Oh, indeed! then he has not always been——"

"Deficient in mind, you were going to say. On the contrary, it is only since a brain fever, followed by a typhoid fever, which seized him during his preparation for his examination at the polytechnic school, that he has fallen into a state of mind which it is difficult to define. As far as health goes he is well and strong enough now. George is by no means an idiot. He has as much sense as many a one who gets on creditably in a quiet and obscure position. If he had not once given promise of superior intellect, his present deficiencies would not strike us so much. He has lost the power, and even the desire, of exertion; and I see no prospect of his being able to follow any profession, or of his doing anything for himself. I feel obliged—and his brother quite agrees with me—to think of his future existence, and to form some plan with regard to it."

"And what are your ideas on the subject, M. le Comte?"

"Well, really, the only thing I can think of, is to find him a wife, and to let him live quietly in the country—either with us, or in a little home of his own in this neighborhood. He is passionately fond of the country and the seaside—that is really the only taste he seems to have. My wife's health is in a precarious state. I am getting old myself, and I feel that it would be a great relief and comfort to us if our son was married to an amiable and well-principled girl, who would supply to him our place, and who could make herself happy in a quiet existence, and with a man who would, I am sure, make her a very kind and affectionate husband."

M. Lescalle was listening intently to the Count's words, and busy thoughts were crossing his mind. "What has he in his thoughts?" he said to himself, and then aloud—

"I should think there would be no difficulty in finding a young lady such as you describe, M. le Comte."

"Well! could you suggest any one?"

"I ought to know, first, what would be your stipulation with regard to this daughter-in-law."

"I should not be very exacting."

"Must she be of noble birth?"

"I do not hold to it. A man gives his own name to his wife."

"And the title of Baronne?" M. Lescalle observed.

"Of course. It is quite a different case with daughters."

"And as to fortune?"

"As to fortune, I should settle on George and his wife twenty-five thousand francs a year, and if the girl had thirty thousand or forty thousand francs of her own, which could be hardly reckoned a dowry——"

"I beg your pardon, M. le Comte. In our part of the country, such a sum is reckoned a very good marriage portion. But as to the position of her family?"

"All I should care about would be its respectability—not trades-people, however."

"And the age of the young lady?"

"Oh, anywhere between sixteen and twenty-five. She ought to be good-looking—pretty, if possible, in order that George might take a fancy to her."

"Let me think," M. Lescalle said, musing as if he was turning over in his mind all the young ladies in the neighborhood.

"There is Mdlle. Veslaint, but she is sickly."

"Oh, that would never do."

"Mdlle. Laurice is pretty enough, but as she has a hundred thousand francs, I scarcely think——"

"That she would accept George."

"Mdlle. du Lac is young and well born, but then——"

"What then?"

"She is humpbacked."

"He would demur at that."

"What would you say to the postmaster's daughter?"

"That would be too great a *mesalliance*."

"M. le Cure has a handsomish niece, but she is forty at the least."

"Almost double his age! Is there nobody else?"

"Well, M. le Comte, I really cannot think of any one else."

"Oh, I am sure you will, if you try. If I could meet with something really suitable, I should not mind adding to what I settle on George and his wife, ten thousand francs for the *corbeille*."

The notary reflected for a few instants, and then said, slapping his forehead, "A thought just occurs to me——"

"What?" the Count anxiously asked.

"There is my own daughter."

"Mdlle. Rose?"

"Yes."

"I thought she was engaged to a young man of La Ciotat."

"Artemon Richer, you mean? There has been some question of it, but I must say I should prefer the connection with your family. There would be, however, a difficulty, even if you thought my daughter a desirable match for your son."

"I certainly should think so. There would be no obstacle on our side."

"But then, you see, M. le Comte," and M. Lescalle hesitated, like a man who has something awkward to bring out. "The fact is, that Rose has not got any fortune at all."

"But you could, if you wished it, do something for us that would quite make up for her want of fortune."

"How so, M. le Comte?"

"By supporting, and consequently securing, the election of my son Jacques."

"I thought as much," M. Lescalle inwardly ejaculated.

"They are all possessed with the same devil."

The Count went on. "There are two candidates, I know—that is, if M. Cesaire de Croixfonds is still in the field. We were told he had retired, but——"

"He now hopes to purchase l'Estraine, which would make him eligible."

"Would not a third candidate, well supported by influential parties, and with a decided talent for speaking, carry the election?"

"It is not unlikely. But I hardly know how I could support M. Jacques, seeing the encouragement I have given——"

"Oh, you cannot have any scruples on the subject. If we arrange the marriage, Jacques' success will become, in your case, a family concern."

"Well, there is truth in what you say, M. le Comte, and I am quite ready to further his interests. How old is M. Jacques?"

"He will soon be thirty; and to get him into the Chamber this year will be an immense advantage. It is worth two years to him."

"I quite see that, and you can rely upon me. I shall be happy to use my influence in his favor; and as to my daughter, I assure you that I am highly flattered at your wish to have her for a daughter-in-law."

The two fathers shook hands, and then M. Lescalle said, "Your young man is not ill-tempered, I hope?"

"Oh, dear, no. He has never in his life said an unkind word to any one. It is possible that his wife may not find him a very amusing companion, but he is sure to behave well to her."

"Ah, well, then it is all right. I would not on any account give my daughter to a man who would make her unhappy."

The Count and the notary walked out of the house, and down the stairs of the terrace, arm in arm, like old friends, to the

great surprise of Vincent, who was not used to see his master on such intimate terms with persons of inferior rank.

M. de Vedelles accompanied M. Lescalle to the gate of the chateau. The last words that passed between them before they separated, were these—"He has never opposed my will." The Count was speaking of George.

"She would never dream of disobeying me," the notary said, alluding to Rose.

CHAPTER IX.

A TRIFLING OBSTACLE.

THE day on which this important conversation had taken place was a Sunday. At eleven the notary had set out for La Pinede, and at the same time his wife and daughter had gone to church. It was one of the finest days of a beautiful spring. The abundant and unusual quantity of rain which had fallen in the early part of the year, had made Provence as green as Normandy and as fragrant as Spain. La Ciotat had never been in such beauty before. The altar of the Blessed Virgin in the parish church was so surrounded by a mass of lilacs and orange blossoms, that the perfume of the flowers exceeded that of the incense.

After mass all the population flocked to the Tasse, a charming promenade on a terrace near the sea. A number of pretty girls in short petticoats, and youths with red fisherman's caps on their heads, were strolling up and down in parties of seven or eight, shaking hands and laughing as they stopped to speak to their friends.

Some of the consequential families of the town were walking more sedately in the midst of that animated, picturesque, and noisy crowd. Amongst the rest M. le Baron de Croixfonds and his family, M. Arnoux and his two daughters in very stiff muslin gowns, M. Richer de Montlouis arm-in-arm with his wife, and Madame Lescalle and Rose, escorted by M. Artemon Richer.

At La Ciotat, as in all small towns, the least little events assume a great magnitude. Everything is made the subject of comments and conjectures. Acts which in Paris no one would take the least notice of, are immediately remarked, and give rise to all kinds of suppositions. It was accordingly a matter of great astonishment to the big-wigs of La Ciotat when Madame and Mademoiselle Lescalle were seen walking with M. Artemon Richer.

We must describe Artemon. He was a tall fellow, almost six feet high, broad in proportion, with a brown and florid complexion and dark hair. His features were symmetrical and heavy, his countenance impudent, vulgar, and good humored. He was always laughing and showing a row of fine white teeth. His dress was in the worst possible taste. He wore diamond studs in his shirt, had large, red ungloved hands, and was the very type of a Provencal swell—to use a slang word—an overbearing, noisy, cynical, insolent, dashing fellow, who carried all before him in the little town of La Ciotat. Rich, handsome, and connected as he was with some of the best families in the neighborhood, nobody ventured to discountenance him. Laughing at everybody and everything, with no deference for any one, smoking in the presence of the finest ladies of his acquaintance, coarse in conversation, and familiar in his way of talking to women and girls, he was, in spite of all this, or perhaps in consequence of it, rather a favorite in the society he frequented, and supposed to have broken the heart of more than one young lady who had fondly and vainly hoped to become Madame Artemon Richer.

After spending some years in Paris on the very specious pretext of studying for the bar, he had returned to La Ciotat, leaving behind him debts to the amount of thirty thousand francs, which his father had paid, stipulating, however, that there was to be an end to his residence in Paris, so he was obliged to find amusement in a small country town and its vicinity. For some time Father Richer laughed at the quarrels, the scrapes, the flirtations, and the follies of his incorrigible son, but at last he became anxious to get him married. Several attempts of the kind had

utterly failed. However, from the first day he had seen Rose Lescalle, Artemon had taken a great fancy to her, and her coldness and reserve only made him the more obstinately bent on marrying the notary's pretty daughter.

Father Richer, as we have seen, hastened to take advantage of this position of things, and what was going on that Sunday on the promenade seemed a public manifestation of the intentions of both families. All the town was watching the parties, and Madame Lescalle's attitude amounted to a first publication of bans. There was a sort of official dignity in her way of receiving the indirect congratulations of her friends, and an ironical condescension in her manner of bowing to the ladies whose daughters Artemon had rejected.

Rose, who was that day an object of envy to all the young girls—Rose, the destined bride of one who had been sought after by the most fashionable of the town beauties—Rose, the heroine of the day, did not seem to share Madame Lescalle's triumphant self-complacency. She walked up and down by her mother's side in a listless manner, without answering a word to the high-flown compliment which Artemon Richer was showering upon her.

All at once Madame Lescalle was interrupted in the middle of a sentence. She felt her arm laid hold of, and turning round saw above her daughter's shoulder her husband's red and irate face.

"Good gracious! M. Lescalle," she exclaimed, "what is the matter? You tumble upon us like a waterspout."

"Madame, you ought to have been at home long ago," the notary answered, in a gruff voice very unusual to him. "Take my arm, if you please, and let us be off."

As Madame Lescalle, quite bewildered, was staring at him without moving, he rather rudely separated her from Artemon, took his daughter's arm under his own, and was going away, when the young man, recovering from his first surprise, said to him in a half jesting, half sneering tone—

"Upon my word, M. Lescalle, you seem to have lost your eyesight at La Pinede! Did not you see that these ladies were walking with me?"

"I saw it very well, M. Artemon."

"Then why are you carrying them off in this sudden manner? You may esteem yourself fortunate that I have reasons which make me unwilling to quarrel with you."

"Oh, pray do not have any scruples on the subject," M. Lescalle rejoined. "I should like to know what right you have to object to my taking my wife and my daughter home, if I do not approve of their walking here?"

Artemon bit his lips as if to restrain a torrent of angry retort which his rising anger was about to give vent to. He said tolerably calmly: "Your conduct, sir, is quite inexplicable."

M. Richer de Montlouis came up at that moment, and exclaimed: "Is this the way you take, sir, of breaking off the negotiation you so readily entered into?"

"You may think what you please about it, sir," M. Lescalle answered, and then making a low bow to M. Richer, he hurried away his wife and daughter.

Madame Lescalle was astounded. During eighteen years of married life she had never seen her husband behave in such a strange and unwarrantable manner. She foresaw a quarrel with the Richer family rendered inevitable, and all her hopes destroyed by this unaccountable burst of temper. M. Lescalle's conduct struck her as so extraordinary that she felt almost afraid he had gone out of his mind. The more she thought of it, the more her surprise and annoyance increased.

As the notary and his companions walked from the Tasse to the Rue Droite, where they lived, not a word was said. When they arrived at their house, M. Lescalle, red, breathless, and agitated, stood opposite the couch on which his wife and Rose had seated themselves. The mother and daughter were awaiting his first words with equal, though a different kind of, anxiety. But he remained silent for a few instants, as if hardly knowing how to preface what he had to say.

Her husband's evident embarrassment inspired Madame Lescalle with courage, and in her most acrimonious voice she began the attack.

"Sir, are you going at last to explain the reason of your extraordinary behavior? Will you, if you please, tell us why you have insulted the only family in this place which offered a suitable marriage for Rose?"

"Rose will have a husband," M. Lescalle replied, in a dignified manner, "worth all the Richers in the world. M. le Comte de Vedelles has just asked her in marriage for his son."

"For M. Jacques?" the young girl exclaimed, blushing crimson.

"No; for M. George—which is just as good. He is quite as rich as his brother. His father settles upon him twenty-five thousand francs a year."

A dead silence ensued. Then Madame Lescalle, divided between the prospect of so magnificent a connection and a feeling of maternal anxiety, said:

"What? the youngest brother—the *fada*?"

"*Fada* yourself!" exclaimed the exasperated notary. "How can you talk such ridiculous nonsense, Virginie? George de Vedelles is a very pleasing young man. Rose will be very happy with him."

When Rose had heard the name of George, she had turned as white as her cambric collar, and leant back, unable to utter a word.

The idea of an objection to this marriage had not entered into M. Lescalle's mind. To do him justice, he had always considered the reports as to George de Vedelles' incapacity of mind as greatly exaggerated. He believed him to be a young man of no abilities, and somewhat below par in intellect, but by no means half-witted. In spite of all his worldliness, he would not have married his daughter to an idiot. He was not aware of the degree to which the reports of his mental deficiency had been spread in the neighborhood, and how deeply they had prejudiced Rose against George de Vedelles. Seeing his daughter so deeply affected, he went up to her, and patting her cheek, said:

"Well, after all you were quite right, Rosette, to turn up your nose at M. Richer's son. I hope you are satisfied now. Who would ever have expected my little girl to be Madame le Baronne?"

Rose sat cold and motionless as a statue. She felt as if a terrible nightmare was oppressing her. At last, bursting into tears, she threw herself into her father's arms, sobbing violently and in broken accents said:

"O my dear father, you cannot mean that you have really accepted this horrid proposal. I am sure you cannot want me to marry that half-witted youth. What a dreadful thing it would be to be the wife of such a man. You would not make me miserable! You did not know that I should hate the thought of it. Oh, I am sure that it cannot be, that nothing is settled about it. You will change your mind, and tell them so, for you are a dear, good father, and you love your little Rose. O dear, dear papa, for God's sake speak, and tell me that you will withdraw your promise, if you have made one. You won't speak. Oh! I am quite broken hearted—quite miserable!"

M. Lescalle, very much distressed by his daughter's tears and vehemence, held her in his arms, and instead of speaking, kissed her hair and tried to soothe her by his caresses, as if she had been a baby.

"Come, come, my child," he said at last, "don't cry now; be a sensible girl. Yes, I love my little Rosy, and I want her to be happy. Now, please don't cry so, my darling. You are quite mistaken about M. George. He is not at all the sort of person you think."

Madame Lescalle, affected at the sight of her daughter's grief, pulled her husband by the arm and said, "Would it not be better, Toussaint, to let her marry Artemon Richer, and be happy?"

"Oh, but mamma," cried Rose, lifting up her face, streaming with tears. "I should not be happy with M. Artemon. I don't want to be married at all. I would rather live always at home with papa and you."

These words gave an immediate advantage to M. Lescalle, who said, "Nonsense, nonsense; that is what romantic girls al-

ways say when their parents want them to make a sensible marriage. You see, Virginie, we must insist upon being obeyed. She does not want to marry either of these suitors. Yesterday she came crying to my room, and wanted me to refuse Artemon."

"If I am absolutely obliged to marry one or the other of those gentlemen, I had rather of the two be M. Artemon's wife than marry M. de Vedelles."

"It is too late for that, my dear. If you had not shown so great a dislike to M. Richer, I should have hesitated at the Comte de Vedelles' proposal. I would have sacrificed great advantages sooner than thwart your inclinations. But as you have no preference for any one, it is my duty to choose for you a husband. Artemon was a good match, and you would not have him. What I have now arranged for you is still more desirable, and I cannot listen to any more nonsense on the subject."

"But why is it so necessary I should be married?" Rose objected.

"For the matter of that, my dear," Madame Lescalle said, "if you did not marry M. de Vedelles, nobody would ever propose to you again after what took place on the promenade."

"I should not care."

"Oh, that is all very well; but some years hence you would not be of the same mind."

"Having publicly broken off, as we have done, the affair with the Richers, it is absolutely necessary that you should make a brilliant marriage," M. Lescalle said.

"You really behaved very ill to that poor Artemon," Madame Lescalle observed.

"What else could I do? I was seeking some cause to break off with the Richers, and had been turning over in my mind fifty different plans on my way back from the chateau, and when I arrived and saw you walking in that public manner with Artemon, which almost amounted to an announcement of the marriage, I was so taken by surprise, and so dreadfully annoyed, that I lost my head. But I am not, on the whole, sorry for it. After such a scene as that, the Richers cannot expect me to support them at the next election."

"What, are you going to fail them about that also? What has made you take such a dislike to them?"

"How stupid you are. Don't you understand why I cannot support them now?"

"No; I don't."

"Why, Jacques de Vedelles is going to stand. I must, of course, favor the interests of Rose's brother-in-law."

Rose was hiding her face against one of the cushions of the sofa, and weeping bitterly.

M. Lescalle loved his daughter, but yet the sight of her grief did not affect him the least. It was not a thing that could enter into his head that a woman was to be pitied who married in a way which secured to her a good fortune and a higher position than she could have had a right to expect. He had always seen how happy young girls looked when they were engaged to rich husbands, and so he made up his mind to let the storm of Rose's tears blow over, as he would have done a shower of rain.

As he left the drawing-room, he whispered to his wife, "She would have cried just as much if we had married her to Artemon. Soothe her, and reason with her—I leave that to you."

The mother and daughter, left alone together, remained silent for some time, Rose engrossed by her sorrow, and Madame Lescalle considering what line she could take. Her maternal and womanly feelings made her understand better than her husband Rose's grief. But there was one idea which towered above all other considerations—now that Rose could no longer marry Artemon, if she refused George de Vedelles, there was danger of her not marrying at all. This result, a most galling one to her pride, was not at all improbable. Some girls of good family, and pretty too, had remained old maids at La Ciotat because no eligible matches could be found for them, and she would have accepted anything rather than such a destiny for Rose. And then M. Lescalle was bent upon this marriage, and his wife was rather afraid of entering upon a course of positive resist-

ance to his will. Like many women of the middling class, Madame Lescalle was in some respects a tyrant, and in others a slave. She governed despotically her household, and did not endure the slightest interference with her authority in domestic affairs; but in important questions, business matters, as M. Lescalle called them, she was very submissive to her husband. She, who would have fought him to the death rather than change, at his bidding, her laundry arrangements, and resisted openly any attempt on his part to interfere with the dismissal or the engagement of a kitchen-maid, trembled at the idea of opposing him with regard to her daughter's marriage. Such being the case, the more she reflected, the more incumbent she felt it to submit.

Rose, who could not divine what was passing in her mother's mind, threw her arms round her neck, and implored her to prevent this new marriage. She spoke with that vehement emotion which a first grief produces in a young heart. Timid as she was, and unaccustomed to express her feelings, the poor child used strong and eloquent words. She described the irretrievable misery of her future life, the hopeless sadness of her young years. Throwing herself on her mother's breast, she said:

"O mamma, mamma! do take care. Is it not a sin to marry a person for whom one feels a deep aversion? It is so dreadful to think that one will never love one's husband. How can I ever care for this M. George? If I remain unmarried, at any rate I can look forward without dread and sorrow to the future!"

Madame Lescalle felt moved by these words. For a moment the idea crossed her mind that it was wrong to doom her child to a fate she so much dreaded. She thought also of the possible dangers and temptations which might be the result of forcing her into this marriage, and for an instant her heart sank within her. But this was only a transient feeling. The habitual submission of the wife triumphed over the mother's anxiety, and her own worldly nature soon resumed the upper hand.

She kissed her daughter, and, with those fond and caressing endearments with which people are apt to soothe a grief they cannot allay, she tried to comfort her in her own way, and to set before her what she considered herself the great advantages of the dreaded marriage.

"Come now, my darling child, you must not make the worst of it. This marriage, which you dislike so much, has, after all, some very good sides. The de Vedelles are a noble and highly respectable family. The Countess is very good and kind, and my little girl will enjoy many advantages which are not to be despised, I can tell you. With twenty-five thousand francs a year, you will be able to have four servants at least, and to keep your own carriage. You will be really one of the first ladies in this neighborhood. Dear me! I should not wonder if you gave a dinner some day to M. le Prefet when he makes his annual visit to La Ciotat. And when you go to Toulon and Marseilles you are sure to be invited to the Prefecture balls. And as to your dresses, why you will be able to get them from Paris. M. George will leave you, I am sure, the management of everything. He is very good and gentle, your father says, and will not thwart or bother you about your expenses. You will be mistress in your own house, and I can assure you, Rosy, that this in itself is worth thinking of. You have no idea what we women have often to go through with a husband."

Madame Lescalle went on in this strain, dwelling at length on that last consideration, which had a somewhat practical reference to her own experience.

All her descriptions of dress, of parties, and of the luxuries of life fell flatly on her daughter's ears. She made no answer, for she felt at that moment that there was nothing in common between her mother's ideas and her own.

Rose was not romantic or sentimental, but she had, like other girls, cherished the hope of a happy marriage, and of being loved by a husband whom she could love in return, and it was with bitter regret that she saw herself doomed to give it up. Artemon Richer's familiar and vulgar manners were disagreeable to her, but not near so much as the prospect of marrying

that strange, uncouth being, George de Vedelles. It never crossed her mind, however, that she could refuse to obey her parents. She had been brought up in the idea that daughters are bound to submit implicitly to paternal authority in that, as in all other respects.

In some of the old-fashioned provinces of France, this is still the common belief. Is this a good or a bad principle? There is much to be said, perhaps, on both sides of the question. Even the strongest advocates of parental authority will admit that there are cases which warrant a departure from the general rule of duty. It is, again, a question whether parental authority may be justifiably exercised, in any degree, on this subject. Different nations, different families, different individuals, will pronounce on this point opposite opinions. We shall not attempt to discuss the matter; but in France, forty years ago, and especially in the provinces, there could scarcely have been found an instance of dissent from the axiom, that a well-principled girl was bound to accept the husband chosen by her parents. This Rose had never doubted; and after this short struggle against her fate, she resigned herself to what she felt to be inevitable.

CHAPTER X.

ANOTHER TRIFLING OBSTACLE.

WHILST the scenes described in the last chapter were taking place at the Maison Lescalle, something not very dissimilar was going on in the *salon* of the Chateau de la Pinede. After his interview with the notary, M. de Vedelles said to his wife: "Well, my dear Claire, you will be glad to hear that Jacques will, in all probability, be a deputy in the next Chamber."

"No, really—for this department?"

"Yes."

"What miracle has brought this about?"

"A very simple miracle; I will explain it in a moment. But will it not be delightful to see Jacques at last launched in public life, and taking part in the affairs of his country? What an effect he will make at the Tribune, with his gift of speaking and his good looks! People may say what they like, but a handsome face and figure are no small advantages for an orator."

"You think only of Jacques, and we really ought to take into consideration George's future. It is a strange life he leads here. Your plan of leaving him to himself, the little notice you ever take of him now, will, I am sure, have bad results."

"You do not, I suppose, wish me to make him a Deputy," the Count answered in a dry, sarcastic tone.

"No, of course, I do not mean that; but he is getting worse again, I am afraid, in health, and I do not know what to do, for it annoys him if I say anything about it."

"Leave him alone, my dear; I have a plan which I will tell you later. It is time now to go to dinner."

They went into the dining-room, where their two sons were waiting for them; the Countess whispered to her husband:

"How dreadfully pale George looks."

"Oh, it is nothing to signify; the boy only wants cheering up."

Madame de Vedelles looked surprised, but said nothing more.

They all sat down to dinner, and the Count seemed in better spirits than he had been for a long time. "What has become of the charming Denise?" he said. "It is a long time since we have seen her."

"Three weeks," Jacques said. George reddened to the roots of his hair, and his father glanced at Jacques as much as to say, "I see you are right in your suspicions;" and then he said, "It was very pleasant having her here. I was glad to see, George, that you are not quite as unsociable as might be supposed. You seemed to enjoy Mlle. Denise's society. Well, it is very natural; young people like to meet young people. But I wonder why you run away when visitors call. Each time that Madame Lescalle and her daughter have been here, off you go like a shot. I wonder at it, for Mlle. Rose is a remarkably pretty girl."

"Yes, I never saw such a lovely complexion," Jacques added. "She is quite a picture of youth, with her fair hair and charming little figure, her soft large blue eyes, her small hands and feet. Amongst all those dark, sallow Provençales, Mdlle. Lescalle really looks like a fresh, blooming rose."

"Well done, Jacques," the Count said, laughing. "You have drawn a very pretty and exact picture of the young lady. And you, George, what do you think of Mdlle. Rose?"

George seemed surprised at being asked his opinion, and answered: "I don't know, I have never looked at her."

"Well, the next time she comes, look at her."

George seemed quite astonished. "Yes," the Count added, "I should like to know your opinion of her."

"I have no opinion about girls of that age," George replied in an ungracious manner. "I don't care to make acquaintance with them—they don't care to talk to me, and what does it signify to me whether Rose Lescalle is pretty or not?"

The Count and Jacques again glanced at each other. The Countess was puzzled and did not understand what they were at. She was singularly matter of fact and had very little penetration. She did not perceive George's emotion, and only saw that there was something going on which she could not make out, and determined after dinner to ask her husband what it all meant. In the course of the evening, when they were alone, he gave her ample explanations, and informed her of his plans for both their sons.

"Jacques a deputy," he said, "and George married, will be a happy solution of the anxieties we have felt about both our children. One of our sons will plunge into the active and brilliant life that suits his talents, and the other will find a happy destiny in an obscure domestic existence, in which his want of capacity will pass unobserved."

Madame de Vedelles listened with deep attention to her husband, and seemed struck by his sagacity and the wisdom of his plans. "I entirely approve of your intentions, my dear husband," she said, "only I hope if poor George objected to what you wisely think would be for his happiness, that you will not make use of your authority to constrain his will."

"I have neither the intention nor the power of obliging him to follow my wishes, my dear Claire. My authority can only consist in the sort of influence a parent has a right to exercise, and that influence I must use. George cannot judge for himself as to what is best for his happiness. He requires to be directed, and it would be no kindness to leave him to his own foolish devices."

The Countess admitted that this was true, and on the following day George was summoned to his father's study. The Count fixed his clear sharp eyes upon him, and in an impressive manner said:

"My dear son, your mother and I have come to an important decision, and though I cannot doubt that you will be ready to accede to anything which we thought would be for your happiness, I wish to explain to you the reasons which have led us to this determination."

"What determination, father?" the young man asked in a gentle and indifferent manner.

"We are convinced that it is desirable for you to marry."

"Indeed! and who do you want me to marry?" George asked in a voice trembling with anxiety.

"Sit down there and listen to me; you will answer me afterwards."

George bowed in assent, and leaning against the corner of the bureau where his father was sitting, rested his head on his hand and remained motionless. The Count then began to relate the reasons which had made him form the plan he had in view: his conviction that a quiet and retired life of domestic happiness would suit George far better than any other; the excellent character he had heard of the young girl whom he wished him to marry, and her many attractions, the probability that whereas girls of a rank equal to his own might object to bury themselves in the country, which was evidently what his own inclinations pointed to, Rose Lescalle would be so gratified at an alliance far beyond what she could have hoped for as to rank and fortune, that she

would fall in readily with all his wishes. And then he touched on the subject of Jacques' election. A vague, half unconscious smile hovered on the lips of his son as he did so, and then the Count added—

"These family considerations would not, of course, have influenced me if this project had not helped at once to promote your brother's important interests and to secure your happiness."

"Father, my happiness—" George began in an eager tone. M. de Vedelles stopped him.

"You had promised not to interrupt me; I have not finished what I had to say to you. I know what is in your mind, my dear boy; your mother, your brother, and myself have all guessed what are your feelings."

"Do you mean—" George said and hesitated.

"Yes, I know that you are cherishing a foolish dream, a senseless hope which can never be realized. Mdlle. de la Pinede has refused an offer of marriage from your brother, whose position in the world and whose abilities are well known. That you are much too young for her is in itself an obstacle, and even if you ceased to be so hopelessly indolent and gave up your strange ways of going on, there would not be the least chance of her accepting you. Jacques' fortune and position did not satisfy Mdlle. Denise's ambition, so you can imagine how utterly impossible it is that she should think of you. It would be an absurd folly to persist in such an illusion. You will find in Rose Lescalle a good wife and charming companion, and once married, or even engaged to her, you will see how that other fancy will vanish like a dream."

There was no danger now of George's interrupting his father. Since the Count had mentioned Denise, his agitation had become so great that he seemed unable to utter a word. He grew pale and red, and then pale again, and when his father left off speaking walked silently towards the door.

"Well, George?" M. de Vedelles said in his sharp, decisive manner. "Now let me have your answer."

George stopped, seemed to collect his thoughts, and then murmured something his father could not catch.

"What is it you are saying?" he asked in an impatient tone, "Can't you speak?"

George turned back, and laying a cold and heavy hand on his father's arm, said, "To-morrow, father, I will speak to you."

"And why not at once, my boy?"

"No, to-morrow," George replied again, and left the room.

"Poor fellow," thought the Count, "he actually requires a whole day to find something to say on the subject. Well, I must let him have his way."

No one at the chateau knew how George spent that day. In the evening, as he had not appeared at dinner, old Vincent, uneasy at his absence, went and knocked at his door, but without result. No answer came, and after two or three renewed attempts, he came down, looking very dejected.

"M. George," he said, "is shut up in his room, and I cannot get him to unlock the door."

"Never mind, Vincent," the Count said, "M. George wishes I know, to spend the day alone; you had better not disturb him."

On the following morning very early some little shepherd boys who were carrying cheeses to Beausset, suddenly met George near Cereste, at about two leagues from La Pinede. He was coming back by the cross-road which led to Toulon. He looked pale and harassed, and was walking fast, but like a person dreaming and half unconscious. The children felt as frightened as if they had seen a ghost. In the *patois* of the country they whispered a few words to each other.

"I say, Jean Baptiste, did you see that man?" the youngest asked.

"He is not a man," the other gravely answered.

"I thought it was the young gentleman at La Pinede."

"Yes; but he is a *fada*, and those sort of people are bewitched. On Saturday nights they hold their meetings on the hills, or sometimes on the sea-shore. Folks like that, look you, seem

very quiet, and keep out of the way of everybody to hide their wickedness, which is dreadful."

"Are you sure of it?" the little one said, glancing back in affright; "and is the young gentleman really one of them?"

"Thereson has told me so, and she must know, for she says she has very often met him."

"I dare say she is right, for where could he be coming from just now, and he walked as fast as if the devil was after him?"

"Oh, he must have been at the Gorges d'Olliouilles, up there in the caverns where the witches dance at night."

"Don't let us go that way, Jean Baptiste; it is not quite light yet."

"What a goose you are! Of course we are not going that way, it would be out of our road," the other answered in a consequential tone.

George had passed the two children without noticing them. It was about six in the morning when he came home. Everybody was asleep, and he went into his room without any one seeing him. He did not appear at breakfast, and his father, anxious not to hurry him, took no notice of his absence. In the meantime he, his wife, and his eldest son discussed the subject on which their minds were running. Jacques had set his heart upon the scheme. His vanity had been wounded by Denise's refusal, and he was longing to be a Deputy, and to exhibit his talents as an orator, to rise in public life, and give the young lady reason to regret that she had declined his offer. Dazzled by this prospect, and biased by his wishes, he persuaded himself that George's marriage with the notary's daughter was really the best thing that could happen to his brother.

As to Madame de Vedelles, she felt some scruples at the idea of her husband exerting his paternal authority to force this marriage on George, whether he felt inclined to it or not, and the more so that she fancied him too timid and too helpless to fight his own battles. It seemed to her that this would be an abuse of parental power which her conscience could not sanction. The more she thought of it the more nervously anxious she became. Her mother's heart protested against the sort of moral coercion which she foresaw would be used to overcome any attempt at resistance on George's part.

The Count himself was not without some uneasiness. In spite of his strong will, and his conviction that he would be right in insisting on his son's complying with his wishes, he knew that there was a point beyond which he could not go. It was not in his power to oblige him to obey, and George's silence and seclusion made him rather afraid that he was preparing a decided resistance to the proposed marriage.

At one o'clock the door opened, and George came in. His parents and his brother all felt at that moment a secret agitation. Jacques looked anxious, M. de Vedelles troubled, and Madame de Vedelles could hardly restrain her tears.

They had on their side age, authority, conscious superiority of mind and experience; and yet, perhaps, because of a slight misgiving that they were not acting in quite a straightforward and disinterested manner, they seemed embarrassed in the presence of one whom they all deemed inferior to themselves in every respect.

George went up to M. de Vedelles, and said, "My dear father, I am quite ready to marry the person you wish me to marry."

After he had uttered those few words, it seemed as if he had exhausted his power of self-command, and sitting down on the couch near his mother, he hid his face in his hands.

M. de Vedelles breathed freely. To him the relief was great. Without a struggle, without any exercise of authority, or even persuasion his object was secured.

"That is right, my dear George," he said. "I felt convinced that you would be guided by our wishes."

Jacques was delighted, and going up to his brother warmly shook his hand. Madame de Vedelles felt a weight on her heart heavier even than if her son had made some objections, or expressed reluctance to the marriage arranged for him. She made a sign to her husband to leave her alone with George, and he and

Jacques went into the next room. Then trying to take one of her son's hands in hers, she said:

"Do you really mean what you say, my dear boy? You have no dislike to the idea of marrying Mlle. Lescalle?"

George did not answer.

"Because," his mother added with a trembling voice—for her fear of her husband's displeasure made her very nervous, though it did not prevent her from doing her duty—"if you hate the thought of this marriage, you must say so, dear child. We cannot wish to forward your brother's interests at the expense of your happiness. Come, tell me the truth, my dear George. Is it fear of your father that makes you agree to marry this young girl?"

"No, mother, it is not fear that influences me. Under other circumstances I should have refused my consent to this arrangement."

"Oh, I am glad to hear that, my dear boy. Then you have not any dislike to Rose Lescalle? You do not know her much, but I am sure you must think her pleasing—don't you?"

"I have never thought whether she is pleasing or not; I marry her because you are all bent upon it. I may as well do that as anything else. You wish me to marry, and I don't care whom I marry."

"Well, I could not have imagined that you could be as indifferent as that, George, on such a subject. Have you ever thought about it? I do not mean to say that in order to be happy together people need to be what is called in love with each other; but marriage is a very serious thing, and we ought not to feel a distaste for the person who is to be our companion for life. I want you to consider the question well, and not to act in this important matter with your usual thoughtlessness. Try to attend to what I say. You look unhappy. Do tell me the truth, George."

"All I can tell you, mother, is, that I have no dislike to that young girl. You have all agreed that I had better marry, so that if I refused to comply with my father's wishes in this case, he would soon be proposing somebody else to me. It is better to agree at once to what he wishes, and not vex him and my brother about it. Oh, my head aches dreadfully, and I cannot go on arguing on this subject. I have never gone against my father's will, much as I have often displeased and irritated him. He is determined I shall marry, and as he has chosen a wife for me, so let it be; only, please do not let us talk any more about it."

Madame de Vedelles felt sad and anxious, but said nothing more, and George felt her.

She then went into the garden, where her husband and Jacques were strolling. The latter came to meet his mother, and kissing her, said:

"Well, dear mother, how smoothly it is all going on—how obedient the dear fellow is. I suspect that at the bottom of his heart he is very much pleased."

"No, Jacques, I don't think so. He is very unhappy, and, I am afraid, very ill. I cannot get him to speak sensibly on the subject. He says he has no objection to this marriage, and yet he seems wretchedly out of spirits. But I don't think you guessed right about Denise. He never mentioned her name, did not even allude to her. His apathy is just what it has been all along, only he is much more depressed than he used to be."

"You will conjure up fears and miseries," the Count exclaimed. "The companionship of a charming young wife, and the new interests of a home of his own, will rouse him out of this morbid state of mind."

"I have never seen him look so miserable as he does to-day."

"My dear mother," Jacques said, "you will not see things as they are. He has, I have no doubt, some trouble to give up his dream of the last two months, and instead of worshipping the dark goddess at Toulon, to do homage to the fair beauty of La Ciotat. But depend upon it, the struggle will be short. Little Rose is charming, and I bet you anything that in a short time he will be enchanted with his destiny."

"God grant that you may be a true prophet," Madame de Vedelles said with a sigh.

CHAPTER XI.

DENISE'S LETTER.

Two days after the eventful decision which had given so much satisfaction to M. de Vedelles, and so much anxiety to his wife, the latter received a letter dated from the hospital at Marseilles. Seeing where it came from, she concluded it was a petition, and left it amongst others to be read and answered later in the day. It was not till some hours afterwards that she opened this letter. As soon as she had begun reading it, she glanced at the signature on the other side of the page, saw the name "Denise de la Pinede," then turning back to the first page, read as follows:

HOSPITAL CIVIL, MARSEILLES, June 2.

My Dear Friend—I feel it a duty to tell you what I would certainly have mentioned to you some time ago—during some of those hours I spent first by your bedside and afterwards by your garden-chair, sharing the anxiety and then the joy of your family, and feeling for a while as if I belonged to you all, if it had not been that I was bound by a solemn promise, made to my dear father on his death-bed, not to give any one an idea of what he knew was my intention until I had attained the age of twenty-one. He was well aware that from the time I was twelve, and made my first communion, I have never had but one thought and one hope with regard to my future life, that of becoming a servant of God and the poor, a Sister of Charity of St. Vincent of Paul.

My dearest father, without absolutely objecting to my following my vocation, had misgivings and anxieties on the subject. I could not obtain his consent to my leaving him. When he felt himself dying, he spoke some beautiful and touching words of assent to God's will in that respect, though it destroyed his favorite dream that I was to marry and live at La Pinede, the ancestral home of his family. But he exacted from me a promise, as I have already said, that I should not commit myself to the life I had chosen before a year after his death, and until that time keep my resolution a profound secret.

I have told you all this, my dearest friend, to explain a silence which you might otherwise think had been injudicious and unfair. You, with whom I had so often spoken of that love which is above all loves, and in which every earthly love is absorbed and transformed, will not wonder that having heard the voice of my Lord calling me to it from the first dawn of my spiritual life, I should have never hesitated to follow that blessed summons. I often thought that you had guessed my secret. Had I not been under that impression, I should not have stayed as long as I did at La Pinede. My constant prayer will be, in my present dear home—the home of the poor and the suffering—that the days I remained under your roof may not have been spent there entirely in vain, that if unconsciously I have caused pain to one you love that it may not have been a bitter or a cruel pain, and that blessings, both earthly and heavenly, may soon heal and dissipate it.

I am only a postulant in this house, but my real postulancy began years ago in the Chapel of the Sacred Heart. Even as a child I used to promise our Lord to belong to Him, and to Him alone, and He took me at my word.

I feel bound to pray for both your sons. The honor M. Jacques has done me, and which he will now forgive me, if he has not yet done so, for refusing, binds me to remember him gratefully before God, and to ask unceasingly for him the priceless gift of faith. As to M. George, his rash vow gives me a sense of duty towards him. Sœur Denise will one day claim something good and great from him in return for her appearance in the little chapel of La Pinede.

You now understand, dearest friend, my strange request that you will keep all the relics of my dear parents in the home of my childhood. I shall never look upon them again; my home will henceforward be a hospital, or a house of charity, in France, or in China, in Turkey, or in America. Oh, the strange, the intense joy of such a farewell to all but Christ and his poor! Forgive if I cannot restrain this cry of gratitude. I am not selfish, dear friend. I carry you and yours in my heart, a weak and a worthless heart, but so full of ardent desire for the salvation of souls, that perhaps God will let it influence with that holy passion those it cherishes and prays for.

With respectful and kind regards to M. le Comte de Vedelles, I remain, dear Countess, your affectionate

DENISE DE LA PINEDE.

Strange as it may seem, it had never occurred to Madame de Vedelles to suspect what, after all, was natural enough in one so religious and devoted as Mlle. de la Pinede. Her vocation took her entirely by surprise; but the surprise was by no means a dis-

agreeable one. A feeling of resentment, which her better feelings had vainly striven entirely to subdue, had been working in her heart at Denise's flat refusal of Jacques' proposal. Since, in deed, she had been led to believe that George had also fallen in love with her, she had rejoiced that the pain and embarrassment which might have ensued from such a complication had been avoided, but still she could not get over the fact that her handsome, clever, and agreeable son had met with a rebuff.

It was therefore with grateful, soothed feelings that she rejoiced over the vocation of her young friend, and the thought that the beautiful and gifted girl, who had made so deep an impression on both her sons, would be acting, as it were, the part of a guardian angel, invisibly watching over lives which, in different ways, were full of subjects of anxiety, was dear to that poor mother's heart. She took Denise's letter into the drawing-room, where her sons had been obliged to attend at the morning to the Count and M. Lescalle's discussions as to the marriage settlements; that is to say, Jacques had listened, and now and then made a suggestion or a remark. As to George, he did not appear more interested in the matter than if there had been question of the letting of a farm, or a sale of timber. At last the notary had gathered up his papers, taken up his portfolio, and departed, well satisfied with the result of his morning's work; M. de Vedelles and Jacques were talking of the election, and George lying half asleep on the couch.

The Countess came in, and sitting down at the table, said in a low voice to her husband: "Read this letter."

M. de Vedelles took it, and as he mastered the contents, his brows were raised in astonishment, and a doubtful smile hovered on his lips. But when he had finished it, he said, "Well, I respect her for it. She is acting up to her convictions. She is a brave and noble soul. I wish——"

He was beginning a sentence which he did not finish, for his eyes met those of his youngest son, fixed upon him with a strange and deep expression.

"You must read this, Jacques," he said, handing the letter to the eldest brother.

Jacques had almost got over his attachment, if it could be so called, to Mlle. de la Pinede, but his vanity had been cruelly hurt. When it was made clear to him that she had rejected him for no other reason than the strange and, to him, the incomprehensible one that she liked better to be a Sister of Charity than the Countess de la Pinede and his wife, he felt considerably mollified and relieved. The untranslatable French ejaculation, *a la bonne heure*, escaped his lips, and then he added: "Oh, well, if it is *le bon Dieu* who is preferred to one, it may be a matter of regret, but one cannot be affronted. Don't you think so, George?"

He handed the letter carelessly to his brother, who took it in an absent and apparently listless manner, and slowly getting up from the couch, walked out of the room and across the garden, straight to the chapel. There he knelt down, and spread Denise's letter before him.

Its contents were no news to him. On that evening when he had disappeared from the family circle, and was supposed to have shut himself up in his room, he had walked all the way to Toulon. Scarcely knowing what he was going to do, he felt he must see Denise, must speak to her. If she gave him the slightest hope—no, not even hope, but if she did not laugh at his love; if she did not scout and scorn him; if she would suffer him to love her in silence, to worship her in secret; if she would take him in hand and raise him by the might of her strong faith and her ardent devotion to those higher regions of the soul to which he had felt his spirit led during her stay at La Pinede; if she would be really to him a visible guardian angel, he would resist every attempt to chain his life to that of another woman, and brave an angry father, whose will he had never resisted.

His excitement had increased with every step of that toilsome journey and, by the time he had reached the outskirts of Toulon, the transition from light to darkness, so sudden in those regions, was just taking place. He was making his way to Madame de Brissac's house with a wild, impetuous determination that he

would see Denise, that he would pour forth at her feet the passionate emotions of his heart, and hear from her the words which would give him courage to face his own family, and assert his own independence. As he hurried along the street, some one tapped him on the shoulder. He turned around, and saw that it was Dr. Dubois.

"You here, M. George?" the physician said. "How are you all at La Pinede? I hope Madame la Comtesse is well, and feels no pain in her arm now. By the way, I suppose she was satisfied with the *garde malade* I recommended. She is a capital hand at nursing, that fair lady, and will make an excellent Sister of Charity. Not but that I think it rather a pity that such a beautiful face should be hid under a *cornette*, much as I love and revere that strange head-dress."

"What do you mean, Dr. Dubois?" George stammered in a nervous manner. "Does Mlle. de la Pinede intend—"

"Intend, my good sir! she *went* yesterday to the hospital at Marseilles, and is at this moment, I have no doubt, already at work under the Sisters. I saw her just before her departure. No bride ever looked brighter and happier. Women are wonderful when they get what they call a vocation, and take to be saints. There is a bit of the soldier, too, in these Sisters of Charity. I like them for that. They are afraid of nothing. Good night, M. George. Give my kind respects to M. le Comte and Madame la Comtesse."

Gone!—gone for ever! Severed from him, not by a grate, or by convent walls, but by a life as hopelessly separated from his own as if an abyss had opened between them. George felt stunned, and mechanically walked on to the ramparts till he came to a bench, and there he sat looking at the sea and the starry sky with a sort of hopeless, dull dejection. None knew what had been the sufferings of his soul during the last three years.

He had led a very strange, a very lonely life, with no inward light as to his own state of mind, puzzled about himself as much as others were about him. From the moment he had seen Denise, the apathy which had so long oppressed him disappeared. His admiration—his love at first sight for her—seemed to awaken his dormant faculties. Her faith and her enthusiasm rekindled smouldering sparks which had languished in his soul. George had never lost his belief in religion, or entirely omitted its most essential duties; but since his illness he had not thought much about it. His piety, if he had any, was of the vaguest description—a sort of almost pantheistic worship of the beauties of nature—a poetical and dreamy religious feeling, such as inspired Victor Hugo in his earlier days, and Lamartine when he wrote his meditations, and had not yet indulged in wild sophistry and heretical aberrations.

But Denise's faith had struck him as something at once divine and real. During the three weeks she had spent at La Pinede the life of his soul had revived but it was only a reflected light as yet. During her absence he had suffered deeply. Her presence had been the delight, and at the same time the strength, as it were, of his existence. It was as if a blind person had for a while, in some strange manner, seen and gazed on a world new to him, and then that the light had gone out and left him in his previous darkness. But still he had lived on the memory of those days. He had looked to their renewal; he had seen bright visions, and dreamed hopeless dreams, till that moment when, sitting in the deepening shades of night, he felt the old, hard, dull feeling in his heart returning, only with a more aching oppression than before.

At last he rose, and with feverish speed retraced his steps. It was then that the little shepherds thought they saw a ghost pass them on the road: it was then that he silently slipped into his room; then that he took out of their box the toys of little Denise de la Pinede, and wept over them as a child; then that he felt careless of his own destiny, indifferent to his own life—anything then he could endure except a struggle, except another allusion to his vain love for that angel who had disappeared for ever from his sight; then that he had yielded that calm, supine

consent to a marriage which could not make him more miserable than he was, and at any rate would content others.

When Denise's letter was given to him, he carried it, as we have said, into the chapel where he had last seen her. He read it on his knees, and it soothed his anguish. The idea that in prayer, at least, she would sometimes think of him, relieved the sharp pain at his heart. He rejoiced at the vow he had made. It seemed to keep up a sort of link between them. He did not pray, unless there was tacit prayer in the tears he shed in our Lord's presence, and his silent gaze at the tabernacle, which he had seen her gazing at with such ineffable love; but there came to him during those hours thoughts which made him say to his mother, when he gave her back Denise's letter, "She has chosen the better part."

CHAPTER XII.

A MISCONCEPTION.

IN the midst of the sort of moral tempest in which Rose Lescalette found herself submerged, she turned towards what seemed to her a beacon light in a dark sea—the wise and tender love of her old Aunt Mede.

In the evening of the day when the scene we have described had taken place in the notary's house, she went out by a back door, walked down an alley which led to the old ramparts of La Ciotat, and then, hiding her face with her veil, and walking as fast as if she was making her escape, took the road to the Capucins.

When she arrived under the dark projection which formed a sort of porch to the old convent, she raised with a trembling hand the heavy iron latch, and, crossing a dark passage, rushed into the hall, where Mise Mede's old servant was spinning.

"Jesus, Mary! how you frightened me, mademoiselle!" Marion exclaimed, quite startled at the young lady's sudden appearance.

"Marion, where is my aunt?" Rose asked.

"Where she is now, that is difficult to say; but if Blanquette has made good use of her legs (Blanquette was the mare that dragged Mise Mede's tilted cart), she must be a good way off by this time."

"What! is my aunt gone out?"

"Gone out? she is gone away!"

"Good heavens! Gone away! Why? When?" Rose exclaimed in despair at this news.

"What happened was this, mademoiselle. Mise Mede received this morning a letter from her old cousin M. Vincent Lescalette, Cure of St. Blaise. The poor dear man said he was very ill, and wanted to see her before he died. Mise said, 'I must be off,' and no sooner said than done. She stuffed six chemises and two or three jackets into a bag, ordered Blanquette to be harnessed, and off she went full trot to Marseilles on her way to St. Blaise."

"Without letting us know," Rose sighed.

"Oh, but indeed she did write a note to M. Lescalette—here it is in my pocket. She told me to take it, but I thought there was no hurry. I meant to give it to Casimir the carrier, but as you are here, mademoiselle, perhaps you will take charge of it."

Rose took the letter, and in an absent manner twisted it in her fingers.

"Don't you bother yourself about that letter, mademoiselle; there is nothing in it but what I told you."

"Oh, dear me!" Rose exclaimed, "what a terrible thing this is!"

"The illness of the good Cure? But you see he is past eighty, the poor, dear old man. It is a good old age, and we can't live for ever."

"No, thank God!" Rose could not help ejaculating.

Astonished at this strange exclamation, Marion looked at her mistress' niece, and was struck at seeing her countenance so agi-

tated. Twenty questions were rising to her lips, but unfortunately for her eager and indeed anxious curiosity, the noise of Casimir's conveyance and his own entrance into the room interrupted the conversation. Rose asked if his carriage was empty, and hearing that it was, asked him to set her down at the corner of the Rue Droite for she felt afraid of walking home alone along the beach.

"Not at your own door, *Mise Rose*?" Casimir asked. "I don't mind going out of my way to oblige any of *Mise Mede's* relations."

"No," Rose quickly replied; "put me down where I told you."

Even the carrier could not help seeing that the young lady looked unhappy, and spoke in a sharp, nervous voice. He remembered what was already the talk of the town, namely, that the notary had publicly broken off his daughter's marriage with the handsome Artemon Richer, and that *Mise Rose* had been crying her eyes out in consequence; and as the honest fellow handed her out of his cabriolet, and watched her until she disappeared round the corner near her father's house, he gave way to sundry inward expressions of disapprobation of the tyranny of parents and pity for *Mise Mede's* niece. Everything that belonged to the old lady was sacred in his eyes, and the poor carrier knew that *Mise Rose* was the very apple of her eye.

In the course of that evening Madame Lescalle had made one more effort in behalf of her daughter, whose grief sat heavily on her heart. The Baron de Croixfonds had left his card for M. Lescalle, and she jumped at the idea that since the Comte de Vedelles had not disdained to connect himself with them, it was not at all improbable that M. Cesaire might, after all, propose for Rose.

"He is good looking—young Croixfonds," she said; "*Rose* would like him much better, I am sure, than that stupid George de Vedelles"—she did not venture to say *fada*. "You have been too much in a hurry about this marriage, Toussaint."

"Nonsense, Virginie! You are so foolish about this sort of thing. Don't you see that we should have been obliged to give fifty thousand francs with Rose if she had married the Baron's son, whereas the de Vedelles make settlements and do not care about her fortune. It is a wonderful piece of luck, I can tell you, and your daughter will think so too when she gets over all these school-girl fancies and becomes a sensible woman."

Rose was indeed so much under the influence of what her father called her school-girl fancies that she still cherished a lingering hope that her marriage would not take place. *Mise Mede* was the only person capable of influencing M. Lescalle's actions, and she clung to the thought that by writing to her and letting her know what was going on she might yet escape her dreaded fate. Accordingly she sent a letter to her aunt, in which she implored her to come back as soon as possible and help her out of this hateful predicament. When this had been accomplished she felt quieter, and offered no active opposition to her father's projects.

As to M. Lescalle, he hastened affairs as much as possible, and contrived so effectually to expedite them that a week after the conditions as to settlements had been agreed upon by the two fathers, M. le Cure of La Ciotat published, on Sunday after the Prone, the banns of marriage between M. le Baron George de Vedelles and Mademoiselle Lescalle.

The congregation was taken by surprise, and extreme was the excitement produced by this announcement. The sudden rupture with the Richers and the news of this most unexpected marriage became, of course, a general and incessant subject of conversation in the town and in the neighborhood. A party was immediately formed on the side of the Richers, which loudly attacked M. Lescalle, who was accused of sacrificing his daughter to his ambition and vanity. It was said that Rose was in love with Artemon Richer, but that her parents compelled her to marry that little idiotic Baron de Vedelles. This gave rise to all sorts of exaggerated reports and inventions, which Rose's pale and dejected countenance seemed to confirm. M. Artemon, though inwardly conscious that at any rate the first part of the

story had no foundation, found it too soothing to his vanity not to encourage a belief in it. This generally accepted version of the state of the case enabled him to bear his disappointment with equanimity; and the idea that he might maintain friendly relations with Madame George de Vedelles after her marriage with a man she was sure to hate and despise kept him from openly resenting the way in which her father had behaved to him.

As to the Richer family, who were restrained by no such considerations, they were loud and bitter in their abuse of the notary.

The Croixfonds, who had also been thrown over by M. Lescalle, vented their resentment by taking part with the Richers. It was curious to see how on this occasion the representatives in La Ciotat of a penurious aristocracy and of a wealthy democracy were for the time being united by sense of common wrong. This momentary fusion of the two camps produced a somewhat formidable amount of hostility. M. Lescalle saw this very plainly, and did not like it at all. He hated a struggle. His character was peaceable as well as ambitious, and what he wanted was to carry his point without an open breach with anybody. The sensation produced by this marriage began to disquiet him, and he was particularly afraid of these drawing-room agitations reaching the ears and exciting the feelings of his electoral clients.

He knew very well that the lower classes in town and country do not easily interest themselves in discussions of this sort, but that they are capable of being roused to it if they become loud and prolonged. The circumstances were imperative; there seemed but one thing to do, and that was to hurry on the immediate conclusion of the marriage. That once accomplished, discussions would be useless, and the subject soon dropped.

With this view, he expedited all the preliminaries and preparations, alleging as his reason an argument most powerful in the eyes of the Comte de Vedelles and his eldest son, viz., the necessity of his going, without loss of time, on a round of visits to the voters in order to secure their support for Jacques de Vedelles.

When everything was ready, and then only, he wrote to Aunt Mede to urge her to come back. He had taken care in his letter not to inform her fully of the state of the case. When he announced to her Rose's marriage, he spoke of his future son-in-law as the son of the Comte de Vedelles, and poor *Mise Mede* never had any doubt but that it was Jacques who was going to marry her darling.

The notary's position had become desperate from the moment he had burnt his ships with regard to any ordinary alliance than that with the Vedelles, and he felt it impossible to stop at half measures, so he intercepted Rose's appealing letter to her aunt, and reasoned himself into the belief that he was acting in the best way for his daughter's happiness and peace of mind. That the marriage must take place was a matter of course, and much the best thing that could happen to her. Therefore it would clearly be wrong not to prevent by every means in his power the bad effects which Aunt Mede's unreasoning tenderness and her exaggerated scruples, founded on idle, groundless reports, might produce in the girl's mind.

Not hearing from Rose herself, *Mise Mede* said to herself: "The dear child is too full of her happiness, and too busy, I suppose, about her trousseau to write to her old aunt. Never mind, the sight of her sweet, bright face when we meet will tell me more than any letters can do."

It seemed as if fortuitous circumstances conspired to favor M. Lescalle's schemes. One morning the Mayor of La Ciotat walked into his office.

"My dear Lescalle," he said, "was it not on Thursday next that we were going to marry your daughter?"

"Yes, my dear sir; at ten o'clock on Thursday morning."

"Oh, I thought so; but I have come to ask if you would mind delaying it a little. The Prefect has written and invited me to stay with him for two days. He wants to speak to me on some important business, but I shall be home again on Saturday evening."

"Then that would put off the marriage to the following Monday?"

"Yes."

This did not at all suit M. Lescalle's views. To wait till Monday was to leave Mise Mede, who was to arrive on Wednesday night, the eve of the day fixed for the civil marriage, for four days longer to cry with and over Rose, and perhaps stir her up to resistance. That would never do.

Suddenly a bright thought struck the notary's mind.

"When do you go?" he asked the Mayor.

"Wednesday evening."

"Then, how would it be if instead of postponing the marriage, we were to fix on Wednesday, instead of Thursday morning for the ceremony at the Mairie? Would that be inconvenient to you?"

"Not in the least."

"You can arrange for Wednesday?"

"Perfectly."

"Well, then, I think we shall settle upon that. I shall go at once and arrange it with M. de Vedelles."

"How will it be about Mdlle. Mede's arrival? Can you get her here in time?"

"Oh, I dare say she will be here before Wednesday: we can write to her, you know; but if by any chance she did not come in time for your part of the business. M. le Maire, she would be present at the religious function, which will take place on Thursday. That, you know, is the chief thing in my Aunt Mede's eyes."

This change of days ensured the desired object. Aunt Mede would not arrive before Rose's fate was fixed, and this was a great relief to M. Lescalle.

Mise Mede had been rather surprised that such short notice had been given her of the day of the marriage. She had only been left just time to arrive in time. Her old relative had been getting better for the last fortnight. She took an affectionate leave of him, and then, with a heart as light as a young girl's, she began her homeward journey, full of joy at the idea of Rose's happiness. As she traveled from Manosque to Marseilles, and then to La Ciotat, the most delightful illusions occupied her mind.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE CIVIL MARRIAGE.

"Few are the words which, once read over, totally change our existence and fix our fate in life for ever."*

This was written by an English authoress fifty years ago, when the Anglican service was the only valid form of marriage for all persons in this country, whatever might be their own religion. But simpler and yet more dry is the purely civil ceremony which in France seals, in the eye of the law, the contract linking together for ever two human destinies. It seems so easy to write one's name at the bottom of the page of a register, and to give a monosyllabic answer to the question put to one by a gentleman in black, after reading aloud a string of official sentences.

The only valid part of the great act called marriage which the law takes cognizance of, is now nothing more than a simple formality. Oh, if young people thought more of what they were doing, if they considered the irrevocable nature of those easily uttered words, of that signature so lightly given, would they not oftener hesitate in following the impulses of their own impetuous self-will, or yielding too easily to the persuasions of others? Would they not be more afraid of rushing, without prayer, without reason, without guidance, into an indissoluble union, the holiest of earthly vocations when sanctified by religion, the dreariest of bondages when unblest by human love and unsustained by the grace of the sacrament?

But youth is thoughtless; it attaches little importance to its

own acts; it is prone to hope blindly, and hope makes it careless. The only undying recollections connected with the marriage ceremony, our French authoress says, are those of the religious service which consecrates it. 'Who,' she asks, 'remembers the Mairie where they signed their names? Who ever forgets the altar where they receive the blessing of the priest?'

Whatever may have been the inward struggles or secret despondency of George de Vedelles and Rose Lescalle they made no remark and offered no opposition when their respective parents informed them of the day fixed upon for their marriage.

As to Rose she had been hourly expecting to hear from her Aunt Mede whose continued and unaccountable silence was a perfect mystery to her. On the eve of the day fixed upon for the marriage, M. Lescalle called his daughter into his study. "Here is a letter for you, Rosette," he said, "a letter from your Aunt Mede." Rose made a joyful exclamation, eagerly took the letter, and carried it to her room, opened it with a beating heart, and read as follows:

MANOSQUE, Sunday.

My Beloved Rosette—I am delighted to hear of your marriage with M. de Vedelles. His mother is so good that I am sure her son must be good too, and if he is not yet everything we could wish in one respect, I feel sure that time and your influence will work a great change in him.

I shall arrive at La Ciotat early on Thursday morning. You can reckon upon me, my darling. Your old aunt will be near you at that happy and important moment, dear Rosette, and join her earnest prayers for your happiness to the blessing of the Church. *A revoir* soon, my dear child.

I remain your affectionate aunt,

MEDE LESCALLE.

This, then, was the final blow to Rose's hopes! This the answer to her impassioned pleadings. Aunt Mede actually rejoiced at her marriage, and satisfied herself with hopes of a change in the one respect in which it did not seem to her completely satisfactory. "Time and my influence!" Rose ejaculated with bitterness. "Will they change a fool into a sensible man?"

But this last disappointment, if severe, entirely deprived her of all energy. She saw no option but to submit with a dull, sad resignation.

On Wednesday morning the Comte de Vedelles' carriage, driven by a coachman in full livery, passed through the streets of La Ciotat, and attracted to their doors all the inhabitants of the little town. It stopped before the door of the Mairie, and all the family got out, Jacques first, in his best looks, smiling and gracious, and then George, pale and pensive, but without any of that feverish agitation he had shown during the previous week. Whether from indifference, or from self-command, nothing could be more simple and dignified than his manner. Every one was surprised. Those who did not know him had expected to see quite a different sort of person, and even his relatives were astonished at his composure.

The Lescalle family arrived shortly afterwards. Madame Lescalle did not attempt to conceal her self-complacent feelings. Her eyes glanced with a triumphant expression round the room. The notary tried to assume a commanding appearance. Rose, though her eyes were red, behaved very well. Her mother had told her of the report in the town, that she was breaking her heart for Artemon Richer, and this had put her on her mettle. She was resolved that nothing in her looks or manner should countenance this supposition.

Then M. le Maire came in, and stood behind the long table, covered with green cloth, which, with some wooden benches and two wicker arm-chairs, furnished the room. Wearing his red official scarf round his thin figure, and with the bust of King Louis Philippe, in white plaster, forming a background to his mild and intelligent countenance, he proceeded to perform the ceremony.

All those concerned in it felt at that moment a sort of uneasiness, and a rather troublesome sense of having taken upon themselves a serious responsibility. George and Rose, though the saddest of the party, were probably more peaceful at heart than

* Marriage in High Life.

their relatives. They were acting under obedience, and their consciences did not reproach them.

Madame de Vedelles was pale and nervous; it so happened that a minor cause of anxiety, but one which involved considerable embarrassment, was preoccupying her mind, and—such is human nature—somewhat taking off her thoughts from the solemn considerations of the moment.

It had been arranged that the Lescalle family should spend the rest of the day at La Pinede, and that on the morrow, after the religious ceremony, M. and Madame de Vedelles and Jacques, who had business to do in Paris which had been delayed on account of the wedding, would take this opportunity of going there, and leave the chateau to the young couple for their honeymoon, returning in time for the business of the election.

But that very morning the doctor, who had been sent for to see a housemaid who had been ailing for some days, had declared that she had the scarlet fever, and gave the startling intelligence that the gardener's children were all laid up with it. This had occurred just as the Count and Countess were dressing and the carriage was at the door. George had had the scarlet fever, so on his account there was no great fear, though even in that case it would scarcely have been prudent to remain in the house; but for Rose to go there was clearly impossible.

To put off the marriage at the last moment was, under the circumstances, equally out of the question, and where to send the young people the next day sadly puzzled Madame de Vedelles. She drew Madame Lescalle aside as soon as the ceremony was over, and looked so miserable that had it been before instead of after the irrevocable act had been performed, that lady would have been greatly alarmed. When the state of the case was made known to her, she of course declared that Rose, not having had the scarlet fever, could not go near La Pinede, and for a moment she paused and reflected, and looked as distressed as the Countess. But suddenly, to the inexpressible relief of both, she exclaimed—

"We have a little *parillon* a few miles off in the mountains, called Belbousquet, rather a pretty sort of a villa. Why should not the young couple take up their abode there?"

"By all means," Madame de Vedelles replied, brightening up. And after some conversation with the Count and M. Lescalle, and for form's sake, with George and Rose, the matter was so arranged.

The sick housemaid had been secluded from the rest of the household, and no danger was feared for the de Vedelles in returning, for one night, to the chateau. But as Rose was not to go there, it was decided that the afternoon should be spent at the Capucins instead, and provisions for a cold dinner were hastily sent there. This was a very trying arrangement to Rose. The sight of the home of her happy childhood, the rooms and the gardens where she had played as a little girl at her old Aunt Mede's feet, seemed to revive all the sharpness of her sorrow, and she had the greatest possible trouble not to break down.

The hours spent there would have been more tedious but for Jacques' unceasing lively talk. It was a relief to every one to smile at his playful sallies. His vanity, which had suffered from Denise's refusal, was soothed, his prospects for the election as good as sure; Madame Lescalle not so bad after all, though she was very vulgar, and Rose, as sister-in-law, not to be at all ashamed of. So he was really in very high spirits, and showed off to great advantage.

The de Vedelles were in admiration of Mise Mede's house, of her picturesque garden, of the lovely view.

"How I wish my sister had been here," M. Lescalle said, "to do, herself, the honors of her dear Capucins."

This wish was too much for Rose to bear unmoved. She rushed out of the drawing-room upon the terrace, and burst into tears.

"Why don't you go and talk to your wife a little, M. le Baron," Madame Lescalle said to George, who was turning over Mise Mede's books. "You ought to make yourself agreeable to her, and pay her a few compliments. Young ladies like that sort of thing, you know."

George took no notice of the suggestion, but when Madame Lescalle was called away by her husband to discuss some question relative to the amount of furniture at Belbousquet, he rose, went out on the terrace, and slowly walked to the place where Rose was sitting. She did not notice his approach till he was close to her. When she looked up and saw him her countenance changed; she started back with an expression of intense fear and aversion. He saw it, fixed his eyes on her for a moment, and then turned away in silence. Shortly afterwards the party broke up.

As they were standing at the door Madame Lescalle called her daughter "Madame la Baronne," and made some allusion to her having soon a carriage of her own. George heard her, and again he smiled in the same faint and unconscious manner as he had done when his father had explained the connection between his brother's election and his own marriage. Rose, who had not heard what her mother had said, noticed that strange, and to her, unmeaning smile; and her heart sank within her. As the carriage drove off she murmured to herself, "Married! and to whom?"

CHAPTER XIV.

MISE MEDE'S RETURN.

On the following day, at about eight o'clock in the morning, Mise Mede's little conveyance, drawn by the tired Blanquette, stopped at the door of the Capucins. The good old lady deposited at home her small amount of luggage, and then with a brisk step, wonderful in a person of seventy years of age, walked to La Ciotat.

As she crossed the Place de l'Eglise, Mise Mede saw two boys carrying green branches into the church through the back door, and others spreading fine sand on the steps of the front entrance.

"It is for the marriage of Mise Rose, my children, that you are doing that?" she said.

"Yes, Mise Mede."

"This is a happy day for me, my dears. Say a prayer for my darling niece, that she may be always good and happy."

"Do, not be afraid, Mise, we won't forget to pray at mass for Mise Rose. She is such a good lady, almost as good as you, Mise."

Aunt Mede smiled kindly on the boys, and walked fast down the Rue Droite, and in two minutes more reached her nephew's house.

Madame Lescalle's maids were busily engaged in getting the rooms ready for the important occasion. All the doors and windows were open, the covers of the old-fashioned chairs and sofas were taken off for the first time for several years, and exhibited in the rays of the morning sun their faded colors and worn-out magnificence.

"Is my niece upstairs?" Mise Mede asked of the oldest of the servants, who was directing the proceedings of her subordinates.

"Oh, dear no Mise; Madame went this morning at break of day to Belbousquet, where Mise Rose is going to stay with her husband. Last night Madame sent some furniture, and now she has gone off there with linen and a lot of things."

"Then the young people are not going to La Pinede?"

"They were going there, but as ill-luck would have it, Babette, the under-housemaid at the chateau, is ill of something catching, and everything is in confusion."

"Where is Rose?"

"She has not left her room yet, the poor dear child; I suppose she is still asleep."

"I shall go and see," Mise Mede said, and scrambling over a pile of cushions and a barricade of footstools, the dear old lady rushed up the stairs, delighted at the idea that she would find Rose asleep, and when her darling opened her eyes she would see her loving aunt watching the moment of her waking, and ready to give her a first kiss.

Rose's room was between her mother's bedroom and a large one in which M. Lescalle kept his papers and Madame Lescalle her pears, her quinces, and her winter grapes. This receptacle of documents and provisions Mise Mede passed through, and opened the door of Rose's room. Struck with painful surprise, she stood on the threshold, dismayed and astonished at the sight which met her eyes, such a different one to what she had expected.

Rose's room, which was wont to be always tidy and nicely arranged, was all in disorder. Portions of a magnificent trousseau covered the chairs and part of the floor, lace and ribbons and embroidered dresses were lying about in a strange state of confusion.

A large open drawer, where Rose kept her clothes carefully folded up, contained all the modest little wardrobe of her school-days. By the side of the coarse linen and plain frocks and collars of this scanty trousseau, were lying books with worn-out covers, and soiled pieces of music, also some of those small things which have no value except as souvenirs—a little faded velvet pocket-book made by a favorite companion, the blue ribbons attached to the wreath won at the last distribution of prizes a little image of the Blessed Virgin inclosed in an ivory case. Two cashmere shawls and several pieces of silk for gowns covered the bed in the corner of the room. But it was evident that it had not been slept in.

Rose was indeed asleep when Mise Mede opened the door but not in her bed. She was half kneeling and half sitting on the step of a wooden prie-dieu, still holding in her hand her little rosary. Her other arm was resting on a chair covered with lace and embroidered pocket-handkerchiefs. Sleep had surprised her in this attitude, her head was lying on her arm and her black and beautiful hair covering a part of her face and of her white dressing gown. She was dozing in that uncomfortable position, like a child fallen asleep in the midst of its tears—sobs now and again heaved her breast. She looked such a picture of loveliness and grief that even a stranger would have been touched at the sight of that fair young creature, in the height of her beauty and her youth, thus weighed down by grief. What must that sight have been to Aunt Mede!

She went up to the young girl and tried gently to raise her up and lay her on her bed. Rose awoke, opened her large blue eyes swelled with crying, and when she saw her aunt, started up and threw herself into her arms with a sort of half-loving, half-despairing embrace.

"What is the matter, my Rosette?" the good old lady said. "What makes you weep so my child?"

"Oh, Aunt Mede, Aunt Mede!" Rose exclaimed, struggling with her sobs.

But what has happened, my darling? Is your marriage broken off?"

"Oh, no, no; would to God it was! It took place yesterday." "Yesterday?"

"Yes, yesterday—oh, it is dreadful!"

"But I don't understand what you mean, my darling. I passed before the church just now and saw the preparations going on."

"Oh, yes, at the church—but I was married yesterday at the Mairie. Oh, my dear dear aunt, why did you not come back sooner? I had begged you so hard in my letter to come back."

"In your letter? I never had a letter from you, my child. What did you say in it?"

"I said all I could, Aunt Mede. I implored you to come and help me—to save me—now it is too late. Oh, dear, oh, dear, I am so wretched!" and Rose wept as if her heart would break.

Mise Mede felt more and more perplexed.

"Did you cry like this yesterday, my darling?"

"No, yesterday pride gave me a sort of courage. I would not let people see how unhappy I was. Mamma had told me that they would say I cared for M. Artemon, and I could not bear that any one should think so, for I did not at all wish to marry him. So I made a great effort, and did not show what I felt. It was when I came back here last night that all my grief returned. I spent a part of the night in arranging my things. It seemed like saying good-bye to my life as a girl. This brought

to my mind my happy school-days, and all the plans and hopes I had about the future."

"And why does the future appear so sad to you, dear child?"

"Oh, my dear aunt, now you know my fate is fixed, I can never look to being happy any more. This made me cry so much that I thought my eyes would be blinded by so many tears. How odd it is, dear aunt, that one is able to shed so many tears!"

"Poor child!" Mise Mede said. "At your age tears flow easily and plentifully, the font is not dried up. Later in life we suffer more, but we do not weep so much."

"Then at last I had a good thought—I tried to pray. I prayed very earnestly, and I think God heard me and had pity upon me, for He made me fall asleep. Just now when I awoke and saw you, I thought for an instant that my marriage was only a bad dream. But now it all comes back upon me, and I know it is irrevocable. I can never, never be happy again."

Mise Mede had not interrupted Rose, in hopes that she would say something that would account for her sorrow and despair. But when her niece left off speaking, she was as puzzled as ever as to the cause of all this misery, and said with a sigh—

"Dear me, my child, what a disappointment this is. I thought you liked M. de Vedettes?"

"Oh, Aunt Mede, I hate him!"

"But what has he done my child, to make you hate him?"

"I feel an aversion to him, and a sort of fear."

"How very strange! You praised him so much that first day when you had seen him at La Pinede."

"I praise him: No, on the contrary. Whenever I have seen him I was struck with his gloomy, unpleasant countenance."

Indeed your mother said M. Jacques was so pleasing."

Good heavens! Rose exclaimed; "whom are you talking of, Aunt Mede? Don't you know it is M. George I have married—the other one—the *fada*?"

Mise Mede was thunderstruck. M. Lescalles ingenious contrivances had completely succeeded. The idea that Rose was to be married to George de Vedettes, to that strange, helpless, stupid young man, whom she had never heard mentioned but with a smile of pity had never even entered her head. After the first moment of painful astonishment, this sudden information produced in Mlle. Lescalle a transport of impetuous indignation and anger. She rose without uttering a word, and walked towards the door. The impulse of her heart was to go and upbraid her nephew with the full force of her indignant and outraged feelings, for the unjustifiable manner in which he had acted towards his daughter.

But long habits of self-control, the constant sense of God's presence which had become the habit of her soul, the daily practice of submitting her every thought, word, and act to that Divine will which was the rule of her life, enabled her even amidst the tumultuous impulses of affection, grief, and indignation which like surging waves rose in her heart, to pause and ask herself what, in that terrible moment, was her duty to God and to her wronged and beloved child.

Her sound practical sense, sustained by her religious principles enabled her to see at once that, as what had been done was irrevocable—though it might relieve her bursting heart to charge Rose's parents for what she felt to be a sin, though they did not see it in that light—that it would neither improve the position nor assuage the sorrow of her injured niece. The impulse was conquered. The anger, which like a lightning flash had convulsed her frame and blanched her cheek, was subdued under the eye of Him whom in that hour she ardently invoked, and then she set herself to the task which she knew He assigned to her—the attempt to soothe, to strengthen, and to elevate that despairing young heart, so rudely dealt with by those who yet loved their child in their own way.

She came back to her niece, took her on her knees as she used to do when she was a little child, and kissing that sweet, pale, and tearful face, she said in the tenderest and most earnest manner—

"My own Rose, I am grieved to the heart now that I know

the reason of your sorrow. I suffer with you, my darling, and I lament what has been done."

"Oh, I knew you would, dear, good aunt that you are. You, at least, love me."

"Try not to blame your parents, my child; they fancied they were acting rightly and for your advantage, only they do not understand what you and I mean by happiness. The whole misfortune comes from that. Now the thing is done, and I want you, my darling, to listen to what my earnest affection for my dear child wishes to make her feel."

"You must not give way, my own Rose, to this sort of despair. You must accept your fate with courageous resignation, and see if it is not possible to look on the future in a better light. You have now ceased to be a child. Yesterday's ceremony made you a woman, and you must try to be a good and sensible one. Instead of looking back with regret and despondency, fix your eyes dispassionately on the future. Depen upon it, Rose, on one who has duties to perform, and a loving heart, need be really unhappy. I know that at your age it is difficult to be satisfied with but a tolerable sort of existence. You had fancied that you were to be, one day, intensely happy. You think that this can never now be the case, and your fate seems to you a very hard and extraordinary one. My dear child, the happiness you had pictured to yourself is of very rare occurrence. Those who have a strong power of loving do not often meet with a return, and it is perhaps still more terrible to lose a blessing once possessed than never to have had it."

"Many and many women have seen their hopes and their joys vanish before they had scarcely been realized. They have had to say to themselves, 'It is for ever at an end, that romantic bliss I thought I had secured.' They have felt as if it would be impossible to live without it, but they have done without it, and found in life a fair share of happiness. There are in your destiny some compensations."

"You are not going, Aunt Mede, to speak to me—like mamma—of my carriage and my gowns," Rose bitterly exclaimed, spurning with her little foot the lace trimmings of her wedding dress.

"No, my child; what I allude to are higher and better consolations than those. I want you to think of the duties which the sacrament of marriage imposes upon Catholic Christians, and the blessings attached to it. I wish you to reflect upon the particular duties you are called upon to perform. From this day forward an important task is assigned to you, young as you are, and a great responsibility. The ordinary course of things is somewhat reversed in your case. Instead of becoming the wife of a man who could guide and direct you, it is your lot to be married to one whom you will have to watch over, to lead, to take care of. My child, there is something sacred in such a mission. It is a holy duty assigned to a woman to be a kind of guardian angel to one weaker, in every respect, than herself. Yesterday you were a child—a thoughtless girl. To-day you will begin to be your husband's protector, his counselor, and his friend. You will be to him what his mother has been. You will teach him how sweet it is to be cared for, and to care for others. And who knows, his heart and his mind may expand in the genial atmosphere of domestic happiness, and you may be rewarded by witnessing a great change in his moral and mental state. Love—the love which springs from the highest of principles and the most sacred of duties, is a great worker of miracles; but in any case there is not a higher, or a sweeter mission, than to bind the wounds of the heart. Infinite graces, heavenly blessings without number, descend upon those who devote themselves to this task. Believe me, dearest Rose, those who make sacrifices to duty, who accept the chalice which the will of their Father in heaven holds to their lips, and carry their cross with courage after their suffering Lord, know deeper and truer joys than those of selfish or worldly souls, who think of nothing but their own enjoyments."

Seeing that Rose was listening to her attentively, Mise Mede's hopes increased of finding in her niece capabilities for the sort of heroic virtue which alone can stimulate the soul to look upon

life and its trials in a supernatural point of view, and lift it up high enough to accept, almost with joy, an exceptional destiny. Encouraged by this hope, she became eloquent, as people always are when intimately persuaded of a truth themselves, and ardently desirous to impart to others a holy enthusiasm in the right direction.

She did not even allude to the sorry advantages of fortune and rank, but continued to touch the chord which had found an echo in the heart of the young bride.

It is wonderful how some natures find relief in the midst of very severe trials by a view placed before them of their own position in a light which had never struck them, and which responds to their intuitive and undeveloped aspirations.

After two hours' conversation with her Aunt, Rose was no longer like the same person, and when Madame Lescaille arrived, and came into her room to superintend her daughter's toilette, she was immediately surprised at the change in her countenance. She looked serene and calm, and there were no tears in her eyes.

"Dear me, Rosette," she said, quite pleased, "how much more cheerful you look. Oh, I have always said that M. le Maire has a gift for changing the mood of romantic young ladies."

"No, dear mamma. It is not M. le Maire who has this gift, but my Aunt Mede possesses it. She has said to me things this morning, which have strengthened and encouraged me."

"Oh, true. There you are, Aunt Mede, just arrived in time. I did not see you at first. You must excuse me. I am so flurried. You see I had to go to Belbousquet early this morning. Everything was to be ready by this afternoon, you know. Oh, dear, and now that I think of it, I forgot the crockery. There is not half enough at the pavilion. What can be done? How will the poor children manage?"

"I can send some," Mise Mede answered, "and everything else that may be wanted."

"That is indeed kind of you, Aunt Mede. I dare say I have forgotten a great many things. On such a day as this one is apt to lose one's head."

"I am afraid, my dear Virginie, that you and your husband have strangely lost your heads since I went away," Mise Mede said in a grave and sorrowful manner; and taking advantage of Rose having been taken possession of by Thereson and seated before the glass in another part of the room, she added, "My advice has not been asked, nor my wishes consulted. What is done is of course irrevocable, and therefore reproaches would be superfluous. But," she continued, with two tears rolling slowly down her wrinkled cheeks, "it will be no easy task, I can tell you, to reconcile this dear child to her lot. You have very hastily disposed of the destiny of such a charming girl. Rose is affectionate and not vain. It would have been far better to have given her to a low-born, but honest and loving husband, than to your melancholy and morose Baron."

Madame Lescaille listened in silence to Aunt Mede's observations, and not feeling able to reply to them, she thought the best thing to do was to break off the conversation. Glancing at the clock, she exclaimed with affected surprise—

"Good heavens! how late it is. We have very little time left. Ought you not to go home and dress, Aunt Mede?"

"My toilette will not take much time. You need not be anxious about it, my niece. At what hour do we go to church?"

"At eleven."

"I shall be in time," and then Mise Mede kissed Rose, and with a look which conveyed all the love and all the encouragement which a look can convey, she departed.

With heavy and lingering steps she walked along the road she had so briskly and rapidly trod that very morning. The weight of her age seemed doubled by a load of grief which put to the severest test her strength of soul and Christian resignation.

At eleven the relatives and friends of the family assembled in the notary's drawing-room, and then proceeded to the church. Everything went off very well. Those who had flocked there in hopes of witnessing something out of the common way, were

disappointed. George looked, as usual, very pale, but was perfectly calm. Rose was quite composed, and did not at all look like a girl married against her will.

The Richer family, who had gone to the church, rather expecting a scene, even perhaps that the bride would faint, could not report any particular appearance of emotion to Artemon. He was rather affronted that what he called "the execution" had passed off so quietly.

"After all," he said, "the girl is only a pretty doll, at this moment under the delightful influence of cashmeres and trinkets. We shall see how long this resignation will last." And then he walked off to the Estaminet de la Marine, and played a pool at billiards.

Three persons had been praying very hard during the ceremony—Mise Mede, who continued to command her feelings till it was over, but who afterwards nearly fainted away in the sacristy; Madame de Vedelles, who, in spite of the smoothness with which everything had gone on, felt anxious misgivings as to the future, and poor old Vincent, who had never been able to make up his mind to wish his young master joy of his marriage, partly because he had been looking as sad, if not sadder, than usual since it had been announced, and partly because he disapproved of what he considered a *mesalliance*, and thought it a great shame to have married the Baron George to the daughter of a notary, in a wretched little provincial town.

He had declared that his old legs would not carry him to the church that morning, and declined the offer of a seat in M. de Vedelles' second carriage. But still, after all, Vincent was there, his grey head bowed down in prayer during the service, and when the young people drove away after the marriage breakfast, his eyes followed the *caleche* as it went down the Rue Droite. With a thoughtful expression, and with his hands behind his back, he walked back to La Pinede, whence the Count, the Countess, and Jacques departed that evening for Paris.

CHAPTER XV.

BELBOUSQUET.

BELBOUSQUET would have been the beau-ideal of a place for a happy honeymoon. The little villa was situated amidst the hills, in a most beautiful position. In M. Lescalle's bachelor days it had been—during the holidays—a resort for himself and his friends. Many a jovial and rather a riotous party had made it a scene of festivity. But when he married, the shooting lodge was turned into a country house, and he had intended to spend there part of the summers, but Madame Lescalle would not hear of it. She declared that nothing would induce her to inhabit such a desert, and seclude herself from the social resources of La Ciotat. Every year she came there for one week, in order to superintend the vintage and the gathering in of the olives, and thought those days the most tedious of the whole year.

Like many women accustomed to the narrow atmosphere of a small provincial town, Madame Lescalle hated the country. Nature had no charms whatever for her. At La Ciotat, her house had a rather large garden, but she never set her foot in it. Two dozen hens, old Thereson's special favorites, took possession of it, and the maids, on washing days, used it as a drying yard.

Madame Lescalle piqued herself on being an excellent house-keeper, and had no idea of losing her time in taking walks. It was quite exercise enough for her to worry her servants, and ascend and descend thirty times a day the stairs which led from her drawing-room to her kitchen. On Sunday she almost always walked for half an hour on the Tasse, not indeed to enjoy the magnificent view of the sea, but to meet people, which meant from twenty to thirty persons whose faces, and generally speaking, their gowns, were familiar to her. These acquaintances met, bowed, or conversed on the event of the week, whatever it happened to be.

As to the young people who were now going to stay at Belbousquet, neither of them had objected to the proposed arrangement. In George's state of mind, he would have acquiesced in anything which saved him the trouble of a discussion, and Rose rather preferred to be out of the way of her mother's gossiping friends.

Belbousquet owed its name to a grove of ilexes, planes, and beam trees, kept constantly green and cool by a pretty stream of very clear water, which flowed from a rock at the top of the hill. All sorts of gay plants and flowering shrubs lined its banks instead of the dusty hollies and stunted pines which generally grow on the hills of Provence. The house was small, flat roofed, and covered with red rounded tiles. The shutterless windows were protected from the sun by white linen awnings. Those of the ground floor opened on a veranda, around the pillars of which a magnificent vine entwined its boughs and rich foliage. That red roof, those white awnings, and that festooning vine gave to this little abode the appearance of a tiny Italian villa.

For many years its only inhabitant had been an old and very intelligent gardener, who had at last arrived at thinking himself sole master of the place. This feeling led him to take more pains in improving the garden than if he had been under the impression that he was working for other people. Thanks to the brook, he had succeeded in surrounding the grounds with those shady covered green walks which are called *charmilles* in France, *taises* in Provence, pleached bowers in Shakespeare's plays—charming retreats which attract imprudent birds, and leave them at the mercy of Provencal shooters. But the winged denizens of the *taises* of Belbousquet had nothing to fear, and in the spring their concerts were so sweet and loud that it was quite a pity that they should have been so long wasted on the desert air, or the equally insensible ears of old Simon.

One day Madame Lescalle took it into her head that the grass on the hill of Belbousquet could very well feed half a dozen goats, and that their milk and cheese would be profitable to her *menage*. So she bought the six goats, sent them to her country house, and desired Simon to look after the said animals, and make the most of them. This did not at all suit the old man. He uttered such loud and incessant complaints that he bored his mistress into allowing him four francs a month to pay a girl to attend to them. Even this was not easily managed, for the wages seemed scanty enough even at La Ciotat. For some weeks Master Simon was obliged to take care of the goats himself, and he so earnestly set about it by kicking and ill-using them, that the poor beasts would soon have given him no further trouble if a woman from Cereste had not brought one day to Belbousquet a candidate for the situation. This individual was a little girl between eleven and twelve, called Benoite, who had never done anything in her life but look after goats. Old Simon engaged her at once.

Little Benoite was as wild, as simple, and lively as her own goats. From the age of three or four she had lived in solitude in the mountains, and cared only for the sky, for the clouds, for the brook, and the wild flowers. She loved the birds that she had taught to feed out of her hand, and the insects that buzzed over the wild thyme, and the squirrels that jumped from one branch to another; but as to people, she knew as little of them as possible, and was the most untaught, strangest, and yet cleverest little creature imaginable. As shy as a fawn, afraid of nothing in the mountains, she did not mind sleeping on beds of leaves, and spending the night sometimes in caves on the hill side quite alone, but not for the world would she have ventured on the high road or into La Ciotat.

The old gardener and the little savage got on well together, but scarcely exchanged ten words in the course of a week. He used to get up at break of day, but even before he appeared in the garden Benoite and her goats were off to the mountains. And at night both were so tired that they hastened to retire, he to his little room, hung round with garlands of onions, and she to her bed of dry leaves in the garret.

To supply for the deficiencies of this very primitive household, the active Thereson had volunteered to accompany the

newly-married pair, and bury herself in that solitude. Having been in the house before Rose's birth, she felt herself called upon, she said, to give her this proof of attachment.

Very few words had been spoken by George and Rose as they drove from La Clotat to Belbousquet. He had asked one or two questions as to the environs of the villa, and remarked on the beauty of the country. She had spoken of the fineness of the day, and mentioned the names of some of the villages they passed through.

When they arrived at Belbousquet, she went into the little drawing-room, and he followed her. She seated herself at the window, and looked at the flower-beds. He stood for a moment before the chimney filled with evergreens, and then going up to Rose, gave her a letter, addressed to Madame la Baronne George de Vedelles, and then went out of the house, and walked up the little path skirting the brook.

Rose felt strangely surprised at his writing her letter. What could be its contents, its purport? She looked at the handwriting. It was firm and distinct; nothing childish or uncertain about it. She was almost afraid of opening it, though she longed to do so. Perhaps it was a bit of nonsense, a hoax, or perhaps it was not from him. His mother had, may be, written to her some advice or some kind words, and intrusted him with the letter. At last she unsealed the envelope, and read as follows:

We have been united by the will of our parents. It is not our business to question the wisdom of their acts. I fancy that on both sides the object in view has been attained: my brother will be a deputy, and you are Madame la Baronne de Vedelles, with all the advantages, whatever they may be, that this title secures.

Two days ago I expected that our lives would be spent much in the same way that many other people spend theirs whose destiny has not been left to their own choice. I was prepared to find in you all the good and amiable qualities which you are said to possess, and which I am convinced you do possess, and I fully intend to try to make you as happy as under the circumstances it was possible for you to be. My own faults and deficiencies, which I am but too conscious of, I hoped to make up for by kindness and constant attention to your wishes. These were my thoughts and ideas when I left the Mairie, where we had been irrevocably united in the eyes of the law, and such they remained until a moment which you must remember, one which decided our whole future. You had left the drawing-room at Les Capucins in tears, and I saw you sitting alone on the terrace in an attitude of great despondency. After some hesitation I followed you. Your preoccupation was so great that you did not notice my approach till I came near you. You turned round, and then in your young face I perceived such unmistakable tokens of fear, aversion, and of contempt, that I saw at once that you loathed the very sight of me. I can never forget that look. From that moment my mind was irrevocably made up. As irrevocable as our apparent union, is my determination never to oblige you—nay, never to suffer you to consider me as your husband, save in exterior appearance, and that only for a short time. I own that it was almost a relief to me when your mother more than hinted, at a subsequent period of the day, that my title and my father's liberality compensated for my own demerits. I felt that I could leave you for ever to enjoy those advantages, unburthened with the presence and the society of one whom you hate and despise.

I suppose you will agree with me that in order to spare the feelings of our respective families and save them annoyance, which I think we should both wish to do, however mistaken has been their line of conduct in our regard, it will be desirable for both of us to inhabit this house for a short time, but I solemnly promise that I shall inflict as little of my society as possible on you, and that very soon I shall take my departure for ever. The blame of the separation will rest with me. Once effected, I shall communicate my decision to my father, and make arrangements to settle on you two-thirds of my income whilst I live; your jointure is secured by our marriage settlement.

Should you wish me to go away at once I am ready to do so. You have only to write to me a note to that effect. If you do not write I shall conclude that you assent to my remaining here a short time—on as distant a footing as the most perfect stranger. I earnestly wish I could restore to you your liberty, but as that is not in my power, I earnestly hope that you may find happiness in the society of your family and friends and the innocent pleasures of the world, which your position will enable you to enjoy.

GEORGE DE VEDELLES.

Astonished almost to bewilderment, Rose held this letter in her hand, trying to understand her own feelings, and to define them.

Could the person who had written it be the weak-headed young man whom people had described as deficient in ordinary capacity, and unable to take care of himself? What was she to think of his determination? Was it a right or a wrong one? Ought she to feel glad or sorry? Was it a great relief or not? Was it true that she had shown him the aversion she felt for him? She questioned her conscience and her memory, and both reminded her of the inward feeling which had, it seemed, manifested itself so visibly and so offensively, and, as he said, decided the whole of their future existence.

Had this announcement been made to her the day before, she would have felt indeed startled at the idea of all that was involved in it, but relief would have been her chief sensation. But since her conversation that morning with Aunt Mede, a change had come over her spirit. She had enthusiastically accepted the idea of sacrifice and self-devotion presented to her. She had dwelt on the thought of being a guardian angel, and it was a somewhat abrupt transition to be discarded as a worldly creature, who had married for the sake of position and fortune, to be abandoned by the person to whom she had meant to devote herself. The situation was altogether changed; Aunt Mede's advice and exhortations no longer applied, and Rose sat with her head leaning on her hand, feeling as if she was in a dream, and longing to awaken.

"Of course," she thought, "I cannot write and tell him to go away at once, and have Thereson sending for papa and mamma and throwing every one into an agitation. I never can ask him to change his mind as to this resolution, he speaks so determinedly, and after all it is not my fault, and in some ways I shall be much happier if he does go away and leave me, strange, extraordinary being that he is. I suppose I did look at him in a way that must have made a man very angry; somehow I never thought he would perceive or feel it. And then mamma talking in that way to him! One thing I know, I will not have any of his money, and I wish I could give up being called Madame la Baronne. Perhaps I shall write to-morrow to Aunt Mede, and ask her to advise me, or perhaps I shall put it off for two or three days and see what happens."

Nothing happened, George went out with his gun early in the morning, and followed by his dog Wasp, wandered about the hills and woods as he used to do at La Pinede. Rose sat in the drawing-room with some work in her hands, or strolled in the garden gathering flowers which she afterwards threw away. They met for meals, and then said a few words to each other in a cold and constrained manner, and Rose wondered how long this sort of life was to last, and whether he would go away without giving her any further notice of his departure. Every morning she took up her pen to write to Aunt Mede, but a strange nervousness made her put it off from day to day.

One evening, she met George coming into the hall with his game-bag in his hand, which seemed quite full.

"You have been successful to-day," she said, glancing at his bag.

"No," he answered, "I have not killed anything to-day," and then went up the stairs.

"Not killed anything," she thought to herself; "and what then, I wonder, does he carry in that bag," and glancing around her to see that she was alone, she peeped into it, and to her surprise saw that, instead of birds and rabbits, it contained books. Hearing footsteps in the passage, she hastily went into the drawing-room, but not before she had ascertained that one of those books was a volume of Shakespeare's plays, and another the life of St. Dominic, by Lacordaire.

"What did it mean?" she asked herself; "does he read during those long hours he spends in the woods? Shall I ask him if he is fond of books? He never seems inclined to talk to me of anything interesting. I feel so like a fool when we are sitting opposite to each other at dinner. If it was only out of curiosity I should like very much to converse a little with him; but I am so afraid of seeming to wish to detain him here after that strange letter and his irrevocable resolution, that I am the first to leave the room when our meals are ended."

Sunday came, and Rose wondered what George intended to do about going to church. She said to him the evening before:

"Mass is at nine o'clock at the parish church."

"Yes," he answered; "but I mean to hear mass at Cereste at six o'clock in the morning, and to walk afterwards across the hills to St. Laurent. If you will excuse me, I shall not come home for dinner; Benoite's mother will give me something to eat."

Rose felt sad, and as she walked to the village church, about half a mile from Belbousquet, a strange sort of depression came over her, very different from all she had suffered before.

She was not satisfied with herself, and yet she hardly knew that she had cause for self-reproach. The future seemed so indefinite. It almost appeared as if she ought to be glad of the change in her destiny. Had she not told her parents, and believed it, that her wish was to remain unmarried and live with them; and would not Aunt Mede be glad to get back her child? But the more she put into shape the prospect before her, the more her despondency increased. Prayer did not comfort her, for she did not know what to pray for. She had no wishes, and she did not know how she ought to act. Still she felt an insuperable dislike to the idea of speaking of George's letter, even to Aunt Mede. As to her parents, she never could tell them of it. If the separation took place, they would hear of it from others, not from her.

She heard mass, and listened to the cure's *prône*, with a dull, heavy weight on her heart. When she returned to the silent house where she was spending so many hours alone, she caught herself throughout the day looking somewhat anxiously down the avenue to watch for George's return—and when she heard his step in the hall, was angry with herself for being pleased he was come back.

He was very tired with his long excursion, said his head ached, ate little at supper, and soon afterwards went to his room. She longed to ask him if she could get him anything for his headache, a cup of strong coffee, or what in Provence they called an infusion of tea; but her shyness with him had become so great that she could not bring herself to say even the commonest things in an ordinary manner, and she lost the opportunity of showing him this trifling attention. She did indeed desire Thereson to go and ask him if he wished for anything. The commission was executed, but in a very ungracious manner. Thereson not unnaturally had taken a great dislike to George. She considered him still in her own mind as a *fada*, and moreover, a very cross and disagreeable one, and when she looked at Mise Rose's sad, pensive countenance, the diminution of her bloom, and the black hue under her eyes, she often felt a strong rising desire to do some bodily harm to M. le Baron, which word she always pronounced with intense contempt, or at any rate to give him a peace of her mind.

Two or three days later, Rose was sitting at the window of her bed-room, which looked on the road, wondering whether any one would come to see her that day. She expected her mother's visit on the following Thursday, that had been agreed upon when she left home, but Aunt Mede or her father might be coming. She dreaded the thought of it, but still longed for something to break the sort of spell that seemed to hang over her.

These musings were interrupted by the loud barking of George's dog. She raised her head, which had been resting on both her hands, and looked eagerly at the road. Perhaps some one was arriving. No! but there was Benoite standing near the gate with a great load of grass on her herd. She was vainly trying to collect together her scattered goats, frightened by Wasp's barking—they were rushing about in every direction. The child laid down her burthen, and running after the terrified animals chased them one after another and drove them into the stable. She then tried to replace the heap of grass on her head, but exhausted and breathless with the efforts she had made to re-assemble her flock, twice she failed in her attempt to raise it, and down fell the grass at her feet.

George arrived at that moment, and seeing the little girl's dis-

tress, he helped her to lift up the load and to balance it on her head, and walking slowly by her side he said a few words to her. Benoite answered and they continued to converse. Rose could not hear what they said, but she watched their countenances and was surprised to see that when they came into the garden, they still went on talking.

The child stood leaning against a maple tree, and George, leaning on his gun, stood listening to her chattering with evident interest and pleasure. Once or twice he smiled kindly as he spoke to the child, and that smile on his pale, melancholy face was like a ray of sunshine on a sad landscape. Rose was struck with the expression which that smile gave to his countenance. She had, strange to say, never looked attentively at George till then. Before their wedding-day, aversion, and, since she received his letter, an unconquerable shyness, had prevented her from fixing her eyes upon him. For the first time she was looking at him without fear of being seen, and as he stood there talking with Benoite, she watched him with intense attention.

It struck her that his features were regular and refined, his hands white and well-shaped, and his figure graceful.

"If he was more like other people," she thought, "he would be very handsome." At that moment Thereson came into the room, and observing that her young mistress was noticing the conversation going on in the garden, she said—

"Ah! there is M. le Baron talking again to Benoite."

"Oh, he takes notice of her, does he?" Rose said, trying to look indifferent.

"Oh, dear, yes! M. le Baron, who has not a word to throw to a dog in this house, often favors Benoite with his society."

"I wonder what she can be telling him that seems to interest him so much?"

"Oh, for that matter, I suppose like takes to like. She is a queer wild imp whom nobody would care to talk to but a . . . I mean a sort of gentleman like M. le Baron. She is half crazy, is Benoite. You never knew such a head as that child has got. Always full of ideas without head or tail, which she strings together and makes songs of, and then she speaks of flowers as if they were people and of birds as if they were Christians; and she is as obstinate and as perverse as a wild cat. And there was M. le Baron yesterday telling her a tale about fairies, and showing her some shells. I don't know where he got them from. I declare it can only be the likes of such a little savage as that who could tame her."

Thereson, working herself up to a state of indignation, was on the point of giving vent to all the anger with which she was bursting against George de Vedelles, but Rose cut her short, and said in a dry manner—

"That will do. It is not your business to criticise what M. de Vedelles does."

"Oh, if madame is satisfied with the life that she leads here, I have nothing to say against it," and Thereson folded her hands in an attitude of resignation.

Rose, to change the subject, asked: "What is that case I saw Simon and the wagoner carrying up stairs yesterday?"

"Does not madame know? It comes from Paris and was sent to La Pinede. M. Vincent sent it on here. M. le Baron had it opened early this morning, and spent some time taking out the books that were in it. The floor of his room is covered with them. Such a mess as it is in! All the straw and brown paper and string thrown about. Did not madame hear the noise he made stamping up and down whilst he unpacked them?"

"No, I slept very late; I had a bad night, and felt tired."

"I am sure I don't wonder at that, or at your looking ill, Mise Rose."

"I am not ill; the air of this place is very healthy."

"The air indeed, oh, I dare say; I am not talking of the air."

"I think you had better go and look after the dinner now. M. de Vedelles is coming in."

CHAPTER XVI.

A CRISIS.

ZON understood that this was a hint to hold her tongue and leave the room. She went down to the kitchen, and, once there in her own domain allowed herself the relief of speaking out her mind to old Simon. She had already told him a great many things during the hour he sat every evening cooking his onion soup and frying the eggs for his supper at the corner of the stove.

The aged gardener proved a very safe confidant. He was as deaf as a post, but knew how to make up for the answers—not generally to the purpose—which he made to the communications addressed to him, by a play of countenance expressing alternately assent and surprise, in a way which generally satisfied his loquacious companion. So she abused George to her heart's content, declared that she was not going to allow Mise Rose to be snubbed by a good-for-nothing, ill brought-up *fada* of a Baron, who preferred the society of a half-witted creature like Benoite to that of his own wife, the most charming girl in the whole country. This should not go on. She would tell her parents how ill he behaved to her, and, shaking violently her saucepan, in which she was making a favorite dish of the country, called a *bouille-abaisse*, she, for the first time in her life, spoilt it. This did not improve her temper, and, whilst waiting at dinner, she darted angry glances at the unconscious and silent George.

That day, as she sat opposite to him at the little table where they had their meals, Rose could not help now and then raising her eyes to his face and contrasting its sad and indifferent expression with the animation and the smiles she had noticed when he was talking to Benoite.

After dinner, the post, which only reached Belbousquet three times a week, brought some letters and newspapers to George, and a note from Madame Lescalle to her daughter, in which she said that M. Lescalle had taken the horse and chaise for a two or three days' excursion to see some of his clients and canvass them in favor of Jacques de Vedelles, and she should therefore delay a little her visit. Rose had written two days before to her mother a letter, in which, without saying anything untrue, she had managed to make it appear that she was well and happy. She had dwelt on the charms of the villa, and described how much M. de Vedelles admired the country. What long walks they took. She did not say that each went out alone. And then she praised Thereson and said how comfortable she made them.

Madame Lescalle, finding all was going on so smoothly, thought it better to leave them, for the present, to themselves. Mise Mode, to whom she showed the letter, was of the same opinion, and so, to Thereson's great disappointment, no visitors appeared.

Ever since Rose had seen George talking to Benoite she had watched for an opportunity of getting acquainted with the child, and finding out from her what were the things she spoke of to M. le Baron. This was no easy matter: the girl was indeed, as Thereson had said, a wild little creature, very difficult to accost, or to detain. After many vain attempts, she happened, one morning that George was gone in another direction, to find Benoite sitting on the edge of a well, surrounded by her goats, which had been drinking, and were now lying at her feet. She started up when she saw Mise approaching her, and prepared to run up the steep path that led to the mountains. But when Rose called out to her in the Provencal dialect, and said: "I have got something for you, Benoite, something which will make you see wonderful things—things you have never yet seen—on the wings of the beetles and in the hearts of the flowers," she stopped and looked at her young mistress with a half-doubtful, half-eager expression.

Rose having heard of the child's passion for insects and flowers, had provided herself with a magnifying glass, the present

her work-bag. She gathered a foxglove and looked attentively through the glass at the inside of the flower, and really astonished at the beauty of what she saw there, exclaimed, "Oh, how lovely!" upon which the little girl slowly approached, like a bird who longs to pick up the crumb you throw to it, but suspicious of your intentions, hardly ventures to come near enough. However, when Rose sat down on the edge of the well, and filled her lap with thyme, heath, and harebells, and then peeped into their secret folds, Benoite could no longer resist. When the glass was applied to her eye, and she saw the wonders it revealed, a cry of delight broke from her. Catching a lady-bird, she inspected it in the same way, and her delight was unbounded.

"Monsieur would like to see with that glass eye," she said. "Will you let him?"

The child's question pained Rose.

"Monsieur often talks to you, I think. Is it always about the flowers and the insects?"

"Oh, about many others things too."

"What sort of things? Birds and shells, I suppose?"

"Oh, yes, the shells! I hear the noise of the sea when I hold them to my ear. Have you ever heard it?"

"No."

"Monsieur does though, and he can tell what the wind sings in the branches of the pine trees, and what the swallows say to each other when they meet in the grove before they fly away. But I have told him things he does not know. That is why he likes to talk to me. 'Benoite,' he says, 'why is that cloud sailing so fast across the sky?' and then I answer that it is carrying a message from the islands out in the sea up to the tops of the mountains where the snow always lies; and then he asks me what the sunflowers are thinking of when they turn round to look at the sun as he sinks behind the hill, and I then answer that they are calling out to him, 'Come back again to-morrow before the Angelus rings.' When I sing my songs to myself, mother and old Simon and that cross Thereson call me a fool, but Monsieur pats me on the head and says I am something else, a word I don't know."

"What does it sound like?" Rose asked.

"Little poet," the child replied.

"And what has Monsieur taught you that you did not know before?"

"Oh, so many things about the good God and the angels."

"But I suppose you had heard of the good God, Benoite, and you knew that there are angels?"

"Yes, Mise, but not that it is the voice of the good God which speaks when it thunders, and that the winds do His bidding. Monsieur says that the mountains, and the sea, and the sun and the flowers sing together a hymn in His praise, and that I must do the same as I go about in the woods and fields: and then he tells me that when he goes away I must talk to my guardian angel, my own angel, who is always with me though I do not see him, and that as he sees the face of our good God, he will teach me to love and praise my Father in heaven. The one I had on earth went away before I was born, and I am glad that the good God is my Father, and the Blessed Virgin is my Mother, and the angels my friends. I think Monsieur is himself one of the angels of the good God. When he speaks a song, for he does not sing his songs, he speaks them to me, I find it more beautiful music than the organ in the church."

Rose had listened to the child with a strange emotion; a vague idea was beginning to dawn on her mind that George was not only not a fool—this his letter, that letter which she was always reading over, had at once showed her—but that he had thoughts and feelings which no one knew of, and which he probably considered her incapable of appreciating or understanding. One thing Benoite had said struck her as if it had stabbed her to the heart—"when he goes away." When, and how soon, would that be? The words in his letter, which spoke of his irrevocable determination to part with her for ever, were remembered with a pang she could hardly account for. Could a week spent in the

with cold, distant civility, and not even attempted to become acquainted with her, have wrought such a change in her feelings that she was actually dreading his departure, not merely from a sense that there was something wrong about it, though she could not clearly see who was in fault, but that she had begun to look eagerly for the brief moments, when a few words were exchanged between them, as the interesting periods of the day, and that if she caught sight of his face at times when he was not aware of it, her eyes could not detach themselves from it. She had sunk into a deep reverie, from which she was aroused by Benoite saying:

"Now, I must take the goats to feed on the moor behind those trees to the left. We always go there at this hour, and Monsieur generally comes home that way with Wasp, who has now made friends with my goats. He is going to tell me the story of a peasant girl, who was a little shepherdess like me, and a great saint. Did you know, Mise, that little girls who take care of sheep and goats could be saints? Will you come and hear the story Monsieur is going to tell me?"

"No, I must hasten home, Benoite; but to-morrow morning where will you be with the goats? I will come to you and you will tell me that story."

"Down by the side of the brook where it runs close to the wood, Mise. Good night," and Benoite walked away, followed by her goats.

Rose went home. "I can never forget that look." Those words in George's letter seemed to haunt her. Had that look that instant indeed decided their fate, as he had said, beyond change and recall? She had been wrong, she knew it, to show feelings she now regretted had existed, and which had disappeared and given way, if not to opposite, at least to different impressions. It had been indeed an almost involuntary fault as far as that instant was concerned, yet she could not but remember that she had nurtured and encouraged in herself contempt and aversion towards the person she knew she must marry, which had prevented her from even trying to see in him anything better than what her dislike and ready belief of what others had said about him, pictured to her.

Again and again she asked herself what could she do now that the tables seemed turned. George really seemed to have conceived an aversion for her. The feeble efforts she made to converse with him on any but the most trivial subjects were met with a polite indifference, and an utter absence of interest. Then Rose felt her temper rising, and she showed a sort of irritation which she could not conquer at the moment, and which yet, she was conscious, might confirm him in the belief that it was his presence which caused it.

It was not strange that a young and timid girl in so difficult a position did not know how to act. It may indeed seem extraordinary that she did not hasten to her Aunt Mise, or write to her for advice; but a vague fear of bringing matters to a crisis, by herself taking any step, or acquainting even Mdlle. Lescalle of the determination George had formed, kept her silent. Mise Mede might think it right to speak to his parents and hers of the intended separation, and she abhorred the idea of their interference, either to make that separation a formal one, or to compel him to alter his intention.

This feeling was so strong that it enabled her to receive her mother on the day after her first interview with Benoite with a smiling countenance, and to speak in a way which satisfied Madame Lescalle that although, according to certain hints which Thereson had given her during a brief conversation in the kitchen, M. le Baron was a very dull and silent companion, and that Mise Rose would soon be ill if she continued to lead such a stupid life, her daughter was well satisfied with her lot.

"But, Mignonne," she said, when Rose expressed her wish to remain on at Belbousquet, "we could very well lodge you in town till La Pinede is purified; and, between you and me, I believe that stupid maid had nothing after all but a common rash. You can stay with us until the Comte and Comtesse return. You must be longing to wear some of your new gowns. I have had

them hung up in my large wardrobe. There is nothing so bad for dresses as to remain folded up in cases."

"I am sure that George likes better to be here than to go to town, mamma. This place suits him so well. He takes long walks into the mountains. He is gone to-day to the rocks of Entreat. I am sorry he will miss you."

"And does he, then, leave you in this way alone?"

"Oh, he heard you were coming, mamma, and——" Rose stopped, and then added, feeling that this sounded rude, "And I suppose he may have thought that we should like to be alone together. George is very shy, you know."

"Well, well, I suppose he will get used to me in time, and the best way will be to bring him to us at once. What day shall it be? Next Saturday? And then, on Sunday, after church, we can take a walk on the Tasse: and you can put on your blue and white moire gown, and your black lace bonnet with the white rose."

"I will speak to him about it, dear mamma, and write you a note."

"Oh, for that matter, my love, I hope you are not going to place yourself on the footing of asking your husband what he likes to do. At any rate, during the honeymoon it is a matter of course that you do as *you* like, and with such a young, inexperienced man—I mean, the sort of man he is—if you manage well you will always have the upper hand. I am sure this is what the de Vedelles wished. And if you find any difficulty about it, I can make him quickly feel that when we agreed to the marriage that was quite understood."

Rose winced at this speech, and felt how dreadful it would be to have her mother interfering in her concerns. So she only answered that as they had hitherto not disagreed about anything there was no occasion for any assertion of her right to have her own way. She again expressed her wish to remain in the country, and Madame Lescalle reluctantly waived the point.

A day or two afterwards, as Rose was standing by a window in a back passage which looked on the garden, she saw George sitting on a bench with a bit of paper and a pencil in his hand. His face, as he looked up, was full of expression, his eyes flashing and his lips moving. He was writing; now and then he paused, looked up, and then wrote again. After a while he put the pencil into his pocket, tore the paper, threw the bits on the grass behind the bench, and walked out of the garden.

Rose had been two successive mornings to the spot where, at noon, the little shepherdess rested in the shade with her flock and, seated by her side on the grass, had made Benoite repeat the stories which George had told her the evening before. First about the holy shepherdess, Germaine Cousin, and then about the dear Saint and sweet Queen, St. Elizabeth of Hungary. The little girl repeated in a touching manner some of the incidents of these wonderful lives. She told how Germaine planted her staff on the hill-side when she went to mass, and left her sheep under the care of her guardian angel. Never, Benoite said, did they stray from the spot, and then, in her picturesque phraseology and with expressive gestures, she described the miracle of the leaves changed into roses, which has been so often painted and carved and sung in verse, in honor of the dear St. Elizabeth.

"Monsieur has made me a song about that," she added, as she finished her recital. "He made it yesterday, and I have been singing it ever since. Shall I sing it to you, Mise?"

Rose nodded assent, and then Benoite's childish voice warbled in the Provencal dialect—the melodious language of the old troubadours—rhymes of which the following verses are a feeble translation:

By all the humble grace that marked
Thy foot-steps from thy birth,
By all the miracles that graced
Thy brief career on earth,

By all the sufferers, young and old,
That to thy threshold came,
By all the lepers foul and sad
That blest thy gentle name,

By each fair rose that bloomed within
The vest where love had sought
With curious eye to scan the dole
To famished beggars brought,

By all the poet's dreams that still
Associated with thy fame,
By all the legends, strange & sweet,
Which consecrate thy name,

By the fair bird whose dulcet notes
Rang in thy dying ear,
And by the hymns which angels sang
Exulting round thy bier,

O love! O sweet Elizabeth,
Bless all who swell thy train,
And let thy spirit, dearest Saint,
Ever with us remain.

Whilst the little girl sang, Rose sat with her face covered with her hands, tears trickling down her cheeks. She made Benoit repeat what she called St. Elizabeth's song till she had committed it herself to memory, and envied the child for whom it had been composed.

When, some hours afterwards, she saw George writing in the garden, his face lighted up with an expression she had never observed in it before, she guessed what he was doing, and a passionate desire seized her to collect the little bits of paper he had thrown aside, and to decipher what was written on them. She watched him out of the grounds, and then furtively made her way behind the bench, and, on her knees, carefully collected every fragment of the torn-up sheet of paper, and carried them up to her room; then, locking her door, she patiently and carefully re-assembled and adjusted the bits of writing, and with flushed cheeks and beating heart made out some lines which had a strange effect upon her. They seemed to her very beautiful poetry, and deficient as she was in literary knowledge, her instinct did not mislead Rose.

The lines were full of melody—of the music of poetry—and they expressed forcibly strong and vehement feelings. They seemed addressed to some one revered, worshipped, and for ever lost, but not dead, for they called upon this being, as far removed from him who addressed her as if death had separated them, still to be the guiding light of his sad existence. He adjured that absent one not to forget, in her hours of worship before the silent altar, to send her angel with a message of strength and peace to him, who, after years of dull apathy, had been awakened to feel, to think, and after a brief gleam of illusive hope, to suffer, with an intensity which had roused latent powers, once possessed, long lost, and now regained. "In the homes of the poor," these lines went on to say, "pray for the soul thou hast taught to love the poor; by the bed-side of the dying, pray for him who often longs to lay down the burthen of life and rest in a quiet grave. God speaks to thee in silence of His sacramental presence; He speaks to thee through the eyes and through the lips which follow and bless thee in the sick ward or the house of poverty, and He will permit thy words to win for me strength to bear my fate, courage to go through life unloved and uncared for; they will reach my soul in hours of solitude, spent in converse with nature and with that God who, when He sent thee to my help, saved me from despair. Faith had waned, hope had died, love vanished from my soul; even though stamped with acute anguish, I welcome thee again."

A strange number of confused, agitating, startling thoughts rushed on poor little Rose's mind as she made out these lines, and pondered over them. Their meaning could not be mistaken. He had cared for some one else—he had loved some one else. He still worshipped in some strange manner that one—whichever she was—whom he looked upon as a saint or an angel. "Then what business had he to marry poor little me?" she exclaimed to herself, with a sudden feeling of indignation, and perhaps of jealousy; but conscience—and Rose's conscience was one of those clear and upright guides which did not lend itself to self-deceit—answered, "The same business you had to marry him when you felt you hated him." "But a man should have more courage than a woman," the inward voice pleaded with some truth. But conscience again replied, "He meant to try and make you happy; his letter said so. And then you spurned him. You showed him you loathed his very sight. Oh, my God! my God! what a mistake I made. Are we both to pass through life, as he says, unloved and uncared for—bearing the same name?"

strangers to each other, strangers as we now are, and soon to part for ever? But who is this woman who he thinks has been a blessing to him, and yet made him suffer so terribly? Who can she be? Will they meet again? By what the verses say, she must be very good, a great deal at church, and taking care of poor people. I wonder where she lives? I suppose I shall never know. I was thinking yesterday of trying to show him that I do not dislike him, that I could like him very much; but now that I find he cares about somebody else, perhaps that would only make him hate me."

For two long hours Rose mused in this way, and was only disturbed from these absorbing thoughts by Thereson's knock at the door, and somewhat impatient announcement that dinner was on the table and M. le Baron in the dining room. She hastily came down stairs, and was so preoccupied, that if George had paid the least attention to her looks, he must have been struck with it: but he was, if possible, more silent and abstracted than ever. Rose, remembering the expression of his face whilst he had been writing the verses which had thrown her into so great an agitation, could hardly believe he was the same person now sitting opposite to her, and only uttering, at long intervals, some commonplace observation.

She became painfully nervous, answered in an impatient manner, and spoke crossly to Zon because, in clearing away the things, she had knocked two glasses against each other. He seemed surprised.

At last, when the servant had left the room, she got up suddenly, and said, "I must ask you to excuse me. I have a bad headache, and must go and rest."

"Are you ill, Rose?" George said, more graciously than usual.

"Oh, no; it is nothing. I feel only a little stupid—a little dull. I think I shall go and see my Aunt Mede to-morrow."

"By all means. I think it will do you a great deal of good. Perhaps you do not take enough exercise."

Rose stood with the handle of the door in her hand. She tried to steady her voice. She wanted to say some insignificant thing about sending for the carpenter's donkey to take her to town, but the effort to control her emotion failed, and she burst into tears. He started, up, and losing all self-command, she exclaimed, "I can no longer endure this—my life is unbearable."

He seemed pained, and said in a grave and earnest manner "I can indeed well understand it. I feel it has lasted too long. I have been considering that it is high time that you should be left to enjoy the society of those you love, and be delivered from my presence. You will do me the justice to say that I have fulfilled my pledge and kept my word. I need not repeat the assurances I have already given you. May God help us both to endure the trials of life. Our paths lie in different directions. May yours be as happy and as peaceful as is possible under the circumstances. Perhaps you will remain a few days at Les Capucins? or else bring back your aunt with you here. To-morrow I shall go to Marseilles."

Rose made no reply. She could not think of anything she could, or would, say, and hurried up to her room, where she remained for some hours, absorbed in painful reflections, made up of bitter regrets and self-reproach. It was late in the night before she fell asleep, and when she awoke in the morning it was past nine o'clock. She dressed hastily, and went down stairs. Breakfast was laid only for one on the dining-room table. Thereson's voice was audible in the kitchen, disputing with old Simon. Rose called her, and asked, "Where is M. de Vedelles?"

"Simon says that M. le Baron went to Marseilles by the first diligence, at five o'clock this morning. He carried his portmanteau for him to the highroad. So that was why I took away the second cup and late. Monsieur said that Madame was going to-day to the Capucins. Will Madame want Casimir's donkey, and am I to go with her?"

"No; I have changed my mind. I shall stay here, at any rate to-day," Rose said, and after swallowing with some effort a few mouthfuls of food, she put on her hat and went to try and find

Benoite. She was ashamed at feeling as wretched as she did. She could not bear to remain alone, nor to go to La Ciotat. She wanted to speak of George, and yet the only human being to whom, at that moment, she felt that she could do so, was the little wild girl of the woods—the child he had been kind to.

CHAPTER XVII.

A DISCOVERY.

ROSE walked with a rapid step to the well, where she expected to find Benoite, and sure enough she was there as usual, but instead of waiting to be accosted and spoken to, as soon as the child saw her young mistress she sprung up and ran to meet her.

"Oh, Mise," she exclaimed, "is Monsieur gone away?"

"He went to Marseilles this morning. Did he tell you yesterday that he meant to do so?"

"Yes, in the evening, when I was taking the goats to the stable, he came to wish me good-bye. He had not said anything about going away when I had met him in the afternoon. Oh, Mise, I am so sorry he is gone!" and Benoite began to cry.

Rose sat down by the child and held her hand in hers. The little girl looked up into her face and said—

"Will he come back again soon? I asked him, but he would not tell me. He only patted me on the shoulder, and said we should meet again some day. Are you, too, going away, Mise Rose? I do not love you as much as I love Monsieur, but I am beginning to like you, and if you will tell Thereson not to call me an idiot, I shall soon love you."

"Oh, she must not do that," Rose said, her cheek flushing. "People don't know the harm they do when they dare to say such things. I don't wonder, Benoite, that you should like Monsieur better than me. I cannot tell you nice stories, or make songs for you as he did."

"But can't you find stories in a book, Mise?"

"Do you mean if I can read them?"

"Well, I suppose so. What I know is, that Monsieur, when he began telling me about the dear St. Elizabeth, was carrying a book under his arm, and in the beginning of it was a picture of her with her lap full of roses, and a gentleman with a face something like Monsieur's peeping at them. Once he said he was going to tell me another story, about a sick man she put in a bed, and then when people came to look at him, there was Jesus, on his cross, lying in it instead. He found that in the book. Perhaps if you had it, you could find some stories in it."

The child's suggestion was not lost on Rose. She made up her mind to venture into the room where George's books were lying about, and to try and discover this one. Whilst she was thinking of this, Benoite was looking at her wistfully. At last she said—

"Mise, could you take care of the goats for an hour or two?"

"Perhaps I could. But why should I?"

"Because then I could do Monsieur's commission this morning instead of late this evening, and not have to keep Toinette waiting so long for her money."

"Who is Toinette?"

"She is a very old paralyzed woman, who lives in a hut half way between this place and Cereste, at the rocks of Etretat. Monsieur found her out one day by chance—the first day he was here, I think—and she was very ill, and afraid she was going to die. Monsieur walked to Cereste and told M. le Cure how bad she was, and M. le Cure came, and he got a woman to take care of her. After that Monsieur went himself every day to see her, and yesterday, 'Benoite,' he said, 'I went to send some money to poor old Toinette, as now I shall not be here to take food to her. I don't know who to send with it; Thereson and Simon would not care to walk so far.' 'Send your guardian angel,' I said. He laughed, and answered that I was for once to be his guardian angel, and when I have taken the goats home I must carry to her this fine gold thing. It is the finest thing you ever saw,

Mise." And Benoite produced a twenty franc piece in gold, which she held up before Rose's eyes with exulting admiration.

"Now I shall be first to-night, and if you would mind the goats, Mise, I could go now to Toinette. She will be so sorry at the usual time when Monsieur took her some dinner and no Monsieur and no dinner comes. If she has this to look at maybe it will comfort her, though she can't eat it. But Monsieur says it will turn into a bagful of pennies when she likes, and then she can buy bread."

Rose was hesitating as to what she would answer, and Benoite went on: "You see, Mise, I thought of planting my staff here, just as Germaine Cousin did and leaving it to take care of the goats; but I am afraid they would not mind it."

"No, because you are not a saint, little Benoite. Thereson says you are very naughty sometimes, and will not do as you are told."

"Then I'll be a saint to spite her," Benoite exclaimed, shaking her fist and stamping in a very unsaintlike manner. "I'll be a saint, and then the birds and the beasts will do what I tell them as the wolf did when St. Francis bade him keep the peace with the people of Gubbio. That was another of Monsieur's tales, But I shall not tell the wolves to keep the peace with Thereson. I will order that great eagle that flew across the sky and perched on the high rock above Etretat last night, to pick out her eyes."

"Oh, Benoite, you would not, if you could, do such a dreadful thing! You would be like a devil, not a saint."

"Well, if not her eyes, her cap. I would bid him carry her cap off her head, away to his nest. I should like to hear her scream after it. But what shall I do about Toinette?"

"Tell me where she lives, and I will go to her myself."

"Well, Mise, you must follow that path that leads through the wood, and then enter the olive groves and go up the hill. You will pass by a little shrine where there is a Madonna, and then turn to the left. In a little while you will come to some lemon and orange trees, and there under the rocks is Toinette's hut."

Rose went back to the house to fill a basket, and then, laden with provisions, and intrusted with the gold piece which Benoite gave into her hands with rather a wistful look of regret, she started on her errand.

It was one of the most beautiful of the long days of June. The air was balmy, and though the heat was great, it was not oppressive. There was shade almost everywhere on her road. Rose thought how strangely different things had turned out from what she had expected. She could form no idea as to her future, and felt as if in a dream. It was a relief to walk, to have something to do, and the fact that she was executing the commission George had intrusted to the little peasant, gave her a sort of satisfaction.

The hut Benoite had described was in a lonely situation at the foot of some rocks; the nearest place to it was Cereste. She easily found it, and explained to the paralytic and solitary old woman that M. de Vedelles was absent, that he sent her twenty francs to provide for her immediate necessities, and that she had herself brought her some dinner.

"And who are you, kind Mise?" the old creature asked, looking with admiration at Rose's lovely face.

"I am the wife of the gentleman who has visited you lately," she answered, and for the first time she said that word *wife* with a sort of emphasis that seemed like laying claim to a name she would not have willingly given up.

"Then the good God has rewarded him for all his charity by giving him an angel for a wife." Toinette rejoined, clasping her thin hands together, and speaking in that poetical manner which in Provence, as in Ireland, is so often met with amongst the poor and the ignorant.

Rose sat down by the bedside, and said, "He has, then, been very kind to you?"

"Good as the good God, Mise. He has saved my life—but done yet more for my soul. Oh, if you knew the peace and the consolation he has given to this poor heart of mine!"

"How so?" said Rose earnestly, drinking in each of the sick

woman's words who told her sad and simple story with the impressionable feeling and natural eloquence of a southern nature. It was an often told tale, that of a mother whose only son had gone on wildly from his boyish days, and had at last been led into crime, more from weakness—so she thought—than from perversity. Bad associates had got hold of him. Two years ago he had been concerned in the robbery of a diligence, tried, and condemned for five years to the galleys.

From the day the dreadful news had reached her, the convict's mother had not heard one word from or about her son. Her soul, as she expressed it, had thirsted for news of him, but none ever came, and hope had died away in her heart till the day that George de Vedelles, in his wanderings in the hills, had accidentally entered her hut. To him she told her grief and, as she saw pity in his face, she poured forth the long pent-up anguish of her soul, and described the rebellious anger she felt against God and man. He had soothed and consoled her.

"Oh, Mise," she exclaimed, "he told me he knew what it is to suffer; that young as he was he had borne a heavy cross, and that he would try to lighten mine."

"Did he tell you what has been his cross?" Rose asked, with her face turned away dreading to hear the answer.

"Not exactly, Mise. He told me he had been ill, and lost for years the strength to work, or even to think. He said this when I complained that in the long sleepless nights in winter, when I lie here alone, I almost go out of my mind. He smiled kindly, and then just said those few words, and he promised to get me news of my son."

"Did he succeed?"

"Oh, yes; thanks be to the good God, who hears our prayers. Ah, that reminds me of what he told me when I was crying so bitterly, something a great saint had said about sons being saved by their mother's tears. Yes, Mise, he wrote to a friend of his at Toulon, some one as good as himself, and he brought me, three days ago, this letter. When he had read it to me he laid it on the bed, and forgot to take it away with him. And oh, I think this was a mercy of the good God, for I have found in it the words about my Antoine. It lies on my heart all the day, and at night under my pillow, such as it is. You may see it if you like, my beautiful Mise. Oh, you are happy to have M. George for your husband. I am so glad God has given him a wife as good as himself. I shall always pray for you both."

"Yes, pray for us both," Rose repeated softly, and two large tears rolled down her cheeks. The letter which Toinette put into her hands was as follows:

My Dear Friend—As soon as I got your orders, off I went to M. l'Aumonier du Bagne, and made inquiries with regard to the convict in whom you take an interest.

It is very like you, George, during the first days of your honeymoon, for I duly received the *lettre de faire part*, announcing your marriage with Mdlle. Rose Lescalle, and saw in the papers that it had taken place. I must say I think you ought to have written to me yourself on such an occasion; but to return to the point, I say it was like you to ferret out in the mountains, to which you have apparently retired, a sick old woman to visit and a work of charity to be done.

When we were at college, and you were carrying off all the prizes, what made me love you, old fellow, was not that you were clever and bright and at the head of our class, but that if there was a kind thing to be done you were always the one to do it, and you seem not to have lost that good habit.

Well, I have good news to give of your young man, wherewith to cheer his mother's heart. He is alive—M. Antoine Lemaire—he is well, and what is better still, he has behaved so irreproachably since he has been at the Bagne, that a few weeks ago he was made one of the intimations of the convict hospital, and is becoming quite a favorite with the physicians. He goes to his duties, and M. l'Aumonier has promised me that the next time he sees him he will tell him that his mother sends him her blessing, and advise him to write to her if he knows how, which seems doubtful. Should he be able to do so, I will inclose to you the letter—as the good old lady's hut which you describe is not, I should imagine, familiar to the postman.

If you can tear yourself away from Belhousquet—what a charming name, and how well-suited the place must be for a honeymoon!—perhaps you could pay me a visit next week. I should like to show you the man of war which my uncle commands, and which is shortly to carry me off, in company with

that uncle, to the shores of the New World. I have heard from the Paris publisher. His reader is delighted with your poems. I could not help laughing, the other day when Césaire de Croix-fonds spoke of you, and asked me if it was true that, since the illness you nearly died of, you had lost all that intelligence you were so noted for at college. I suspect, old fellow, that in that utter inability to occupy yourself with anything but poetry, there has been a tiny bit of *mauvaise volonté*. Am I unjust, M. George? Perhaps so, for a clever physician assured me, the other day, that after such a shock as your brain experienced in that fever, it was sometimes years before a person recovered the power of application, even though the mind was not affected. But God has given you genius, and you will take the world by surprise, especially the little world of your own family, who have, none of them, I fancy, the remotest idea of what lies under that silent, absent, languid, provoking manner of yours.

Write and tell me if you can come here next week, and believe me your affectionate and devoted friend,

ALOYS DE BELMONT,
Naval Lieutenant.

May I venture to beg you to present my respects to Madame George de Vedelles?

Light had been gradually dawning on Rose's mind, and this letter, so singularly thrown in her way, revealed to her the truth which she was beginning to realize. George de Vedelles was a totally different being from the one the reports of others and her own imagination had drawn. He had been misunderstood and underrated by his relatives, despised by his father, compassionated by his mother, held cheap by his brother, and hated by herself. No wonder he had told the poor paralytic woman before her that heavy had been the cross he had to bear. No wonder that when he had seen her on the day she had been made his wife look at him with contempt and aversion—she, the ignorant, foolish little girl, who had not thought it worth her while to judge for herself of the man to whom she had been married—that he turned from her with disgust, and left her to her fate. And he had known and cared for one who must have been so different from herself, his very ideal of a perfect woman, whereas she must be, in his eyes, one of those creatures who think trinkets and smart dresses and a carriage and servants the only elements of happiness. She kept the letter from George's friend a long time in her hand, and almost learnt by heart its contents. When at last she laid it down, and Toinette said, "Is it not a beautiful letter?" Rose started, and then answered—

"Indeed I am very glad you showed it to me. I shall come and see you again in a day or two."

"With M. George?" Toinette asked.

"Yes, if he is returned," poor Rose replied, with a pang, for she felt how unlikely it was that he would come back, though if he did, she thought things would be different than they had been; and perhaps—who knows?—they might be walking through those groves and across those hills one day together, on just such a lovely evening as this one, and visions of domestic happiness, that seemed to have vanished for ever, would rise again before the wedded girl who had, as she mournfully said to herself, turned her back on her own happiness.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE CLUE LAID HOLD OF.

Rose came home, and after eating her solitary meal she thought of Benoit's suggestion about the large book where Monsieur found the stories about St. Elizabeth of Hungary, and after some hesitation ventured into the room, which was called M. Lescalle's study, and which George had used as a sitting-room.

Next to seeing persons the thought of whom occupies us, the most interesting thing we can do is to examine a room which they have inhabited. There are so many small but significant traces of their presence. The prominent feature in this one was the books—some of them lying on the floor open and on their faces, others still in the case; some on the table, some on the chimney. A great many sheets of paper, scribbled upon,

were thrust into a waste-paper basket. The disorder in which everything was left gave Rose some satisfaction. If George had really gone away for good, would not he have packed up his books? but perhaps he had given directions to that effect. She had not the courage to ask Simon or Thereson if he had done so.

Besides the books, there were some materials for drawing and painting in the open case, and in the corner an unframed picture loosely wrapped up in brown paper. She took it up and found it was a landscape representing the Chateau de Valsec, the hereditary manor of the de Vedelles which the Count had sold in order to purchase La Pinede. She took the painting to the window, and looked with interest at the view of a place where George had spent his childhood. It was a venerable pile of building—very imposing in its old-fashioned style, and surrounded by tall stately larches which added to its rather gloomy and aristocratic grandeur. In the corner of this painting, Jacques de Vedelles' name was written. He had told her, the first day she had seen him, that he painted landscape, but had never succeeded in drawing figures.

As she was carrying back to the case the view of Valsec, she happened to turn it round, and found that on the other side of the canvas there was the portrait of a woman, a most beautiful face, with a fine, dignified and sweet expression, which it was impossible not to be struck with.

"Oh, what a lovely countenance!" Rose inwardly exclaimed; and then she saw, at the corner of this painting, not Jacques' name, but the letters, G. de V., and the date, April 7th, 1835.

That was the day she had been at La Pinede for the first time. Suddenly it flashed upon her that as she was going away and the carriage in which she was with her parents was driving through the avenue gate, she had caught sight of a *caleche* going up to the chateau, in which a beautiful young person was sitting by the side of an old man. She must be the person he had painted on the back of his brother's picture of Valsec; she must be the person he had cared for and regretted so intensely. Who was she? Then the idea of Mlle. de la Pinede suddenly struck her; she had heard of her beauty, and what the ladies of La Ciotat called, her *exaltation*.

On the day that she was walking listlessly by her mother's side on the Tasse, whilst Artemon Richer was paying her compliments, she had heard some one telling her mother that the beautiful heiress at Toulon, Mlle. de la Pinede, was going to be a Sister of Charity.

How often it happens in life that we hear at one time things said with an utter indifference, which perhaps at some other period would have stirred the depths of our hearts with indescribable emotions. She guessed now, she felt certain, that it was Mlle. de la Pinede George had so profoundly admired, so passionately loved.

It must be so. She held, for a long time, the portrait in her hand, and gazed at it with deep emotion. She thought that the heavenly expression of that beautiful face told the story of the high vocation of the unearthly love which God had given to this favored child of His Heart. She felt no jealousy, scarcely regret, that George should have known, and loved, and been influenced, by one whom he must now look upon as a superior being, a sort of angel or saint. She compared the lines he had written, and which she had preserved, with the picture before her eyes, and not a doubt could exist in her mind that the object of his love and his reverence was Denise de la Pinede.

So engrossed was she with this discovery, and the contemplation of the face he had painted with rare talent and exact fidelity, that it was long before she remembered the purpose with which she had entered that room. Rousing herself, at last, from this absorbing preoccupation, she began to search for the volume Benoit had described, and soon found it. That volume was the life of St. Elizabeth of Hungary, by the Comte de Montalembert.

Are there not many who at some turning-point of their existence have met with a book which has been to them like a revelation, and from the reading of which they can date an

initiation into the secrets of a higher life, which, when it seemed hard to discern light in the future of their own destiny, opened before them aims and hopes and possibilities never yet dreamed of, heights they had never even in thought approached?

This was the effect produced on Rose by that beautiful history of the most lovable of saints, written with all the magic charm of brilliant genius united with ardent faith. It was not so much the magnificent language, the matchless eloquence of the great champion of the Church in France, which riveted and entranced her, as hour after hour she sat reading this new-found treasure, as the emotions, the ideas as to this world and the next, which it awoke in her mind. For the first time she conceived what a glorious and blessed thing life can be, even in the midst of the deepest sorrows, when once the relations of the soul with its Creator and its Redeemer have become practical and absorbing. For the first time she understood to what a degree human love can be purified and exalted in two souls united together in the same supreme love. Never has the imagination of man portrayed a more touching ideal of Christian marriage than the quaint old biographers of the dear St. Elizabeth—as she was always called in the land of her birth—have drawn of her union with that model of Christian princes, the good Duke Louis of Thuringia. The minute details of their domestic life and of the tender attachment and sweet piety of these wedded saints, precluding, as it did, his early death in the Crusades, and the deep sanctity of her widowhood, the poetical and familiar traits of the mutual affection of the young betrothed couple, the touching fidelity of his love for her, and her tender and grateful devotion to him, selected and traced, as they are, by a master's hand, formed a picture which laid hold, as it were, of Rose's heart, and seemed to call forth all its latent powers of thought and feeling. Seeds sown in her soul during the early years she had spent under her Aunt Mede's roof had been lying dormant, ready to expand under the ripening effects of suffering, and now they were about to bear fruit.

As Rose perused those eloquent pages she traced the impression they had made on another mind; pencil marks, and a few words here and there, revealed to her what had been George's thoughts as he read them. This agreement, this sympathy between them, struck her with a mournful sense of what might once have been, and now might never be. When he had felt the full force of some passage descriptive of Christian wedded love, or of exalted virtue, she had, no doubt, risen before his mind as the childish, frivolous school-girl she must have seemed to him, and the image of Denise de la Pinede passed before his eyes as the living type of womanly perfection. "Yes," she mentally exclaimed, "I can feel for him, I can pity him now, I can understand what his aversion must be to the worldly, selfish girl he thinks he has married. What a strange fate ours has been! But there must be a meaning in it; God never does anything or permits anything without a purpose; I have often heard Aunt Mede say so. She would have gone out of her mind, she said, during the Reign of Terror, but for that thought. I will go to her, or rather, I will write and ask her to come to me. I cannot leave this place; George might come back any day. Oh, that would be too good to be true. If I saw him coming in at that gate, what should I do? Perhaps be again afraid of showing him that I love him. And is it possible? Do I really love him, now that he hates me?"

As she was asking herself this question, Zon knocked at the door, and on being told to come in, the aged handmaid appeared, and giving a contemptuous look at the books scattered on the floor, exclaimed, "Good gracious, Mise Rose, what are you doing here, sitting in the middle of all these dusty books, and reading by candlelight, too! I declare it is enough to put your eyes out. Dear me! Have you not learnt enough during the eight years you spent at school, that you must be poring over books now that you are grown up?"

"It is to amuse myself that I read, Zon."

"Ah, well, I should think you did want amusement; but you might find something better to do than that."

"What would you have me do?"

"Why, go to town, of course, and pay visits. You have never put on one of your best gowns."

"I cannot go and visit about during my husband's absence."

"Ah, indeed; well, if I was Madame——"

Zon did not venture to express her thoughts in words, but an expressive shrug of her shoulders was significant enough of the very low estimation in which she held her young mistress' husband.

"Well," she said, "if Madame won't go into town, why does not she invite her friends here?"

"I do not want to see anybody for some days."

"People must please themselves, I suppose," Zon rejoined in a tone of resignation; "but if you lead this sort of life much longer, I expect that you will go into a decline. I don't know but that it would be my duty to tell Madame Lescalle what I think of it, but if I go to town, who would cook Madame's dinner?"

"I forbid you, Zon, to say anything about me to my mother. In a few days I shall go and see her myself. In the meantime, dear old Zon, do not meddle with what concerns no one but myself."

Rose went into her bedroom, taking with her the book which had made so deep an impression on her mind, and one or two more in which she had seen pencil marks and annotations in George's hand, and others on the blank leaves of which were written some unfinished poems, which she read with a beating heart, for they let her into the secrets of his soul. They contained allusions which marked them as his own, and now that she knew, by Aloys de Belmont's letter, that he was a poet, she valued every word, every line, which gave her an insight into his character—a glimpse of his mind.

That day and that night worked a great change in Rose. Feelings of strong religious fervor had been awakened in her, and at the same time a pure though earthly affection was dawning in her heart. She had discovered in the life of St. Elizabeth of Hungary that these two feelings are not incompatible. A strange new happiness seemed filling her soul during the hours of that sleepless night, which the foresight of suffering did not interfere with. Hers might be a sad fate in the eyes of the world.

It might be God's will that the cloud which hung over her future life was never to be dissipated, that he whom she now felt she could have dearly loved, might never care for her, never return to her; but she now discerned something higher and greater than earthly love, than earthly happiness. That light which sometimes breaks slowly on the mind after long years, sometimes after a life-time of conflict and trial, illuminates others at once, in the morning of their days, not always permanently or consistently, but it shines on the mountain-tops, even whilst the upward path is encompassed by dark shades. Such was the case in this instance. The clue had been laid hold of, and clutched by that young hand which erewhile was helplessly stretched out in the midst of unfathomable gloom. The hour when we can look forward to a life of suffering, of solitude, or of sacrifice, with a thrill of supernatural joy, is often the turning-point in our lives.

When three days afterwards Rose ran out to meet her Aunt Mede, whom she had urgently invited to come and see her, the penetrating eyes of the old lady perceived that a change had come over her darling niece. The soft, smiling, childish face was paler than she had ever seen it, the dark blue eyes had an earnest look such as she had never observed in them before. Even in the sound of her voice there was something different from its usual tone.

At first they spoke of indifferent things, as people do who are longing and yet afraid to begin an important conversation, and then Rose took her aunt upstairs to the room next to her own, which she had prepared for her, and made her sit down in an arm-chair near the open window, and as she used to do in her childhood, placed herself on a stool at her feet, her sweet face looking up into that kind aged face which looked down upon her so calmly and so wistfully. Mise Mede longed to ask,

"Are you happy, my darling?" but she did not feel confidence enough that the question could be answered affirmatively, to do so.

"I suppose your husband is taking one of those long walks," she said, "which you wrote to me he liked so much. Will he come home for dinner? I want to make real acquaintance with my nephew."

Two large tears rolled down Rose's cheeks, and a sudden flush gave them a deep color. "Aunt Mede, I have so much to tell you, so much to ask you. My mind is full of new thoughts, and such strange, different feelings, I hardly know how to begin telling you what has happened——"

"Happened, my child? What can have happened to you?"

"George has left me."

"Left you? Good heavens, Rose, what do you mean? When? How?"

"Four days ago."

"And where has he gone?"

"To Marseilles."

"With whom?"

"I am not quite sure; but I think he is staying with a friend of his—a M. de Belmont."

"My dear child, you should not have suffered him to leave you," Mise Mede said, with a look of uneasiness. "Who knows if he is capable of taking care of himself?"

"Aunt Mede," Rose exclaimed, "you, and all of us, and his own family, have made a great mistake about George—an extraordinary mistake—which I have found out too late. Oh yes too late!"

And bursting into tears, Rose hid her face on her aunt's knees.

"Speak, my child, you frighten me. Is he quite out of his mind?"

"Oh, no, Aunt Mede, he is not a bit out of his mind. He is full of goodness and cleverness. He is one whom a woman could most dearly love and admire. And if on the day we were married I had not shown that I hated and despised him—it was before you came back and talked to me, Aunt Mede—I might have been the happiest of wives; but now it is all over with that kind of happiness."

She paused, but seeing her old aunt's intense anxiety, she went on—

"As soon as we arrived here he gave me this letter."

She placed it in Mademoiselle Lescalle's hands, and when she had read it, said—

"He has acted up to what he wrote. For form's sake he remained here till last Monday, but we hardly spoke to one another, and then I think it was because he saw me looking so unhappy, and thought I could not bear the sight of him, that he went away, and I shall never see him again."

"That does not follow," Aunt Mede said, and seemed for a few moments buried in thought. "But what besides this letter—which is indeed a proof that he is far from being the sort of person we supposed—has made you think him clever, as you say you did not speak together hardly at all?"

Then Rose, in an artless and touching manner, told Mise Mede of George's conversations with Benoit, related to her by the little shepherdess; of the verses she had seen him write, and those she had found in his books; of the portrait he had painted of Mlle. de la Pinede, and his romantic devotion to her. And then, word for word, she repeated what Toinette had told her of his visits and their conversations, and last—not least—of M. de Belmont's letter, which had thrown light on the strange and fatal mistake of those who had mistaken the languor of an overwrought brain, and the fanciful peculiarities of a poetic nature, for proofs of mental deficiency and disordered understanding.

"I see it all," Mlle. Lescalle slowly ejaculated. "It may all come right, Rosy; but oh, my darling, if you knew how my old heart aches at the thought of what you have had to suffer, and may still suffer, my own poor darling child!" Then Mise Mede's self-command gave way, and tears coursed down her wrinkled cheeks. Rose took her hands in hers, and, looking at her earnestly, said—

"Aunt Mede, don't cry. You will not grieve when I have told you all I feel and think. When we both thought, on my wedding-day, that I was bound for life to a *fata*, though we tried to make the best of it, that was a sorrow which had something of shame in it; and then, though I wished to be good, I had no idea, I did not understand, what you must know so well, Aunt Mede—that there is a way of being good, which is not the common way, and that in it suffering and joy can be strangely blended—"

Rose stopped, overcome by her feelings, and looked up at the sky with an expression in her face which revealed to Aunt Mede the work of Divine grace which had taken place in that young soul. She slowly took up the words Rose had uttered, and said—

"So strangely blended, my child, that a heart broken with the deepest human sorrow may still know a happiness which is indeed a foretaste of heaven. But tell me how you have learnt this blessed secret? By what means have you discovered it?"

"Toinette's words, and what she said of all George had done for her, first gave me an idea that one might be very unhappy oneself and yet find happiness in loving God and doing good to others. But what explained it to me was this book."

She had brought with her St. Elizabeth's life, and laid it on the knees of her aunt, whose eyes glistened when she saw it.

"Ah! my child; you understood as you read these pages—they are very familiar to me, Rosy—for the first time you understood what it is to be a saint?" Rose nodded assent. "And then came the thought that to aim at sanctity, and by dint of sufferings and sacrifices to climb the steep ascent which leads to it, might be a greater, deeper joy than any this world can give." Rose again bowed her head and remained a moment silent. Then she said—

"Aunt Mede, if you knew to what a degree I feel this! I see two paths before me. I have no clear idea which God means me to follow. I leave that to Him;" and again Rose looked upward, and joined together her hands, which rested on Aunt Mede's knees. "What I mean is, that I see two kinds of life which He may intend for me."

"Tell me what you are thinking of, my child."

"Well, Aunt Mede, it is possible, is it not, that George may return, and that he may some day find out that he can love me, as I have found out that I can love him, and then that we might be happy together, and love God and serve Him together, like the good Duke Louis and the dear St. Elizabeth? But if he does not come back, and if he never cares for me at all, then my life would be like hers after her husband's death. I would live with you, dearest Aunt Mede, or here perhaps, if my parents would let me remain here amidst these beautiful mountains, and the poor people scattered about this place, nursing the sick, teaching the children, and praying in the village churches. I did not know till quite lately, till these few last days, what prayer meant. I used to say my prayers, and I knew our Lord was in the tabernacle on the altar, but not as I now know and feel it. Oh, what a wonderful change comes over one when this is once realized! Which of these two kinds of lives would be best, do you think, Aunt Mede?"

"In themselves, my child, and for those bound by no duty and no indissoluble tie, a life devoted to God and to the poor is, without doubt, the most easy and straight road to heaven. If yours is to prove an exceptional fate, if though married you are irretrievably separated from him whose name you bear, then you may believe that what God will have permitted is intended to be the means of raising you to a more than ordinary perfection. But remember, my child, that yours is not a case in which you can be allowed to choose between these two kinds of lives. There is no choice for you in the matter."

"Perhaps not, Aunt Mede; still it might depend a little on what I felt and did."

"What you must feel and what you must do, Rose, is not optional. The vow you pronounced at the altar, the union which received the blessing of the Church, is not canceled by what has since occurred. You have a responsibility with regard to the soul of your husband, from which nothing can relieve you. You

must not acquiesce in his forsaking you, even in order to lead a life of what seems to you higher perfection. The most perfect life for Christians is that in which God has placed them, and your duty is clear and evident."

"Is it? I have felt, on the contrary, so perplexed how to act."

"How to act may be a question, but the intention of your acts should not be doubtful. You must leave nothing undone to undeceive your husband as to your feelings towards him. You must let him know that you can, that you do, love him—"

"Let a man who hates me know that I care for him; and that, after he has made it plain that he despises me?"

"Is it the Rose who has been opening her heart to me that he despises? Does he know her? Has he had any opportunity of reading into her soul? But even if he had, if he had consciously and deliberately rejected the wife God has given him, it would still be your duty patiently, sweetly, unweariedly, to pray, to long for his return, never to give up the hope of it, and whilst rising daily higher in the upward path to which God's grace is calling you, to hold out to him the hand which was given him on your marriage-day, and trust to the end that your strong and patient love—the love of a Christian wife, not the fondness of a frivolous woman—will at last recall him to your side, and draw him to God."

"From the notes in his books, and his verses, Aunt Mede, I should think George was nearer to God than I am."

"It may be so, my child. We cannot judge of others in that respect, even when well acquainted with them, and I do not know your husband at all; but I do not reckon religious poetical effusions as any proof of a real and firm faith. Those who have read Victor Hugo and Lamartine's verses in their early days, know in what admirable language pious emotions can be poured forth, and yet how little real religion may inspire them."

"Oh, Aunt Mede, I have seen some of their writings amongst George's books, and found beautiful things in them, but they did not help me as I now want to be helped. It was like drinking wine too strong for my head, or smelling a too powerful perfume. When I read *this* book, I feel as if I was breathing mountain air."

"Feed on that kind of air, Rosy," Mdlle. Lescalle said, with a smile. "Brace yourself with it in preparation for whatever God may appoint to your lot. I begin to think that my Rose, the child of my heart, is going to be one of those valiant women whom the Scriptures speak of, and I do not give up the hope of a little earthly happiness for her either, if she will be brave and patient. We need not despair at all that everything will come right. You and your husband are very young, two children in fact, who have been mismanaged by others, and then left to yourselves, mismanaged one another. We must see now what is best to be done. You must let me think and pray about it. An hour or two on my knees will help me to a good thought."

Rose threw her arms round her old aunt's neck, and kissed her as she used to do in her childhood, when Mise Mede made everything straight for her.

"I will leave you alone for a while," she said, almost gaily; "but don't pray too long, Aunt Mede, for now I have begun I want to tell you much more about what I think, and wish, and mean to do, whether—" She stopped. It was easy to read the thoughts that were passing through her mind, and the connection between those words and the next she uttered. "Toinette, you know, said George was very good. It was he who made her forgive people and love God, and M. de Belmont wrote to him that why he liked him so much at college was because he was so kind to every one; and you know, Aunt Mede, that I think, I really do think, that in going away and leaving me he thought he was doing right and what was best for me."

"Very likely he did, Rosy, and we must find out the best way of undeceiving him on that point. And now your cheeks are paler than I like to see them, my child; put on your hat and go and breathe some of that mountain air you are so fond of, amidst the wild thyme and Benoit's goats. No, don't take a book with you. Look at the sky and the flowers, gladden your heart with

the thought of Him who made them and you, and leave the future in his hands."

"Yes, Aunt Mede; and the road up the hill leads to Toinette's cabin. I will pay her a visit."

A moment afterwards Mdlle. Lescalle saw from her window Rose crossing the garden carrying a basket on her arm, and singing George's hymn to St. Elizabeth. She watched her graceful form, her light step, and listened to the sweet young voice caroling away as she disappeared amongst the trees, with a grateful sense that, come what might, the child of her heart had discovered the road to true happiness.

CHAPTER XIX.

AN EMERGENCY.

THE result of Mise Mede's thoughts and prayers was, that she wrote that evening a long letter to a dear friend of hers at Marseilles, one of those women whom people instinctively turn to when a difficult thing has to be done, or a great act of kindness to be performed—one of those energetic, large-hearted French souls who carry everything before them, and work wonders with a marvelous ease and singular simplicity. Later on, Mdlle. Amelie Lautard was decorated with the Cross of the Legion of Honor. So great and obvious was her influence for good over the soldiers at Marseilles, amongst whom she indefatigably labored, that, in consideration of her services, the Minister of War, under the empire, granted her the privilege of shortening, at her discretion, in certain cases, the term of military punishment.

But at the time we are writing of, her career of charitable work was at its outset. Her father had been intimately acquainted with Mdlle. Lescalle, and she had always remained in correspondence with the little Amelie she had known and loved as a child. After many anxious reflections, she determined to tell her the whole story of Rose's marriage and of George's unrequited attachment to Mdlle. de la Pinede, now Sœur Denise at the House of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul. She knew, through Mdlle. Lautard, that this young girl had been staying a short time before at the Chateau de la Pinede, and that she had felt interested in George de Vedelles, whose isolation in the midst of his family and deep melancholy had painfully struck her. She thought that Mdlle. Lautard might sound Sœur Denise on the subject and gain from her some information as to his character and state of mind, which would furnish a clue to the most effectual means of bringing about his return to his wife and a good understanding between them.

Mise Mede was much puzzled herself as to the real truth about George. On the one hand, she had heard it positively stated that his intellect was weak, his character childish. It seemed strange that his own parents, his clever father and his loving mother, should have been deceived on that point; and though all that Rose had related and shown to her militated strongly against these preconceived impressions, it had not quite destroyed them. Then Thereson also had burst into the room where Mdlle. Lescalle was meditating, on these conflicting accounts, and, finding at last a vent for the ire which had been accumulating in her soul during the last weeks, poured forth unmitigated expressions of indignation against M. le Baron, whom she described as a sort of savage idiot, whom it would be well if Mise Rose had never seen, far less married, and who would have deserved to have had Benoit for his wife. They would have been a well-matched pair. She with her foolish gibberish and wild-cat ways, and he with his rude, gloomy, and silent manner.

In vain did Mdlle. Lescalle try to check this torrent of abuse. She could understand that under the circumstances Zon might be justified in her aversion to George, and some of the things she said made some impression on her own mind. The doubt was, whether with some amount of apparent ability when he held a pen in his hand, he was not incapable of acting rationally, or

even taking care of himself, in which case it would be necessary to communicate with his parents and with Rose's father and mother, at the risk of estranging him for ever from her, or, on the other hand, of trying other means of bringing them together, removing misconceptions, and appealing to his sense of honor and duty. She came to the conclusion that this ought to be attempted if possible, and that Mdlle. Lautard might not only consult Sœur Denise, but seek out also M. de Belmont, with whom she hoped George was still residing, and find out from him the real truth about his college friend.

Such was the purport of the letter she wrote and sent that evening. During the following days she devoted herself, with the tact and ability which belonged to her character, to keep Rose's mind occupied with cheering and strengthening thoughts, to excite her to hope and yet to prepare her for disappointment. They prayed and they read together, visited Toinette, and found out other poor people in the neighborhood, sadly in want both of a little help and of moral and religious instruction. A new world, that of practical charity, seemed opening to the young girl, who had so rapidly grown from a child into a woman. It was a singular blessing for her during those days of uncertainty, that she was experiencing those first fervors of awakened faith in and love of God, which fill the soul with a strange sweetness and almost lift it above earthly cares and joys, and that she was guided at that time by one so clear-sighted and thoroughly sensible as Mise Mede. The thought had crossed her mind that her niece might, like herself, perhaps be called to a life of entire consecration to God, and the full practice of the evangelical counsels.

She remembered, how, when she was Rose's age, and the world was smiling upon her and life looking very bright and fair, a cloud, small at first, like a man's hand, had appeared in the horizon in the shape of the first news and rumors of revolutionary disturbances in the neighborhood. The great events which had convulsed her country seemed at first to have little to do with the prospects and the destiny of a young girl in the middling ranks of life, but the storm went on disturbing and at last darkening every part of France, and bringing the scaffold within sight of the humble homes of the *bourgeoisie* as well as the nobility. Then war to religion was declared, that war to the knife, which rouses the soul to sacrifice, to action, to heroism, and then Mdlle. Lescalle understood what God's voice was saying to her heart, she understood what was her vocation, not the peaceful cloister—convents were everywhere closed and communities dispersed—but the religious life in her own threatened home, the religious life in its essence, the religious vows, in its work amongst the poor, the prisoners, the dying, at the foot of the scaffold, in the cell of the condemned, in the caves and garrets where mass was said in secret, in the perilous services rendered to a faithful, outlawed priesthood.

She embraced this life with unflinching zeal. She thanked God that He had cast her lot in those dark days. She met dangers which brought her within an inch of death, and often felt that nothing less than the complete consecration which severs at one stroke the heart from all merely human joys, could have borne her unscathed through the fiery furnace of that terrible time. And now she asked herself, "Was it God's will that Rose should walk in her steps? Had he assigned to her a peculiar destiny, in order that, bearing the name of a wife, she should be, as she herself had been, a religious in life and heart? Was that her vocation, strangely brought about, strangely accomplished?" She watched her without seeming to do so. She sounded her heart as they sat conversing under the pines, or strolling along the mountain paths. She observed the changes of her countenance, and noticed little acts which would have escaped a less penetrating and loving eye, and soon made up her mind that whether her husband returned to her or not, Rose was not called to tread the path she herself had trodden, not even amidst calmer scenes and brighter days.

Many little indications showed her that her heart was not free, that not only had she discovered that George de Vedelles was one a woman could love, but that she had fallen in love with him since the day she had with such terrible reluctance become his

wife, and he had rejected her. If for a little while they spoke of anything else, she would always revert to something relating to him, to his books, his verses, his paintings, or to the remarks she had heard him make on the surrounding scenery, to the Sisters of Charity, and Sœur de la Pinede, and Valsec, his parents, and his friends, Benoitte and Toinette.

She saw her kneeling before the tabernacle praying with intense fervor, her eyes filling with tears, and her little hands clasped together. When she came out of the church there was a sweet and peaceful expression in her face, but Aunt Mede noticed that she went and sat on a bench from whence the road could be farthest seen, and gazed wistfully upon it. When in the house, if the gate was heard to open, her eyes turned towards it with a rapid glance.

Then, again, Mdlle. de la Pinede's picture was placed in Rose's own room. With some women perhaps this would have seemed a proof rather of indifference than of love, but Mise Mede knew her niece's humble, tender, affectionate character, and felt certain that it would be free from jealousy, and lovingly attracted by all that one she loved cared for. "It cannot but come right," she said to herself, and almost as impatiently as Rose looked for the postman's arrival on the day she expected an answer from Marseilles.

When the postman, two days afterwards, called at Belbousquet he had only one letter to leave, and it was not addressed to Mdlle. Lescalle, but to the Baronne George de Vedelles. Rose was sitting at breakfast opposite to Aunt Mede when Zon laid it on the table. She turned red and then pale, and her hands trembled so much that she could hardly unseal the envelope. Mdlle. Lescalle watched her with anxiety, and felt the news was bad before Rose had finished reading the letter, which she handed to her in silence. This was what George had written:

My Dear Rose—It will hardly surprise you to hear that I am about to embark with my friend, M. de Belmont, on board his uncle's ship which is going to cruise for two years amongst the South Sea Islands. I have written to my brother to request him to break this to my mother and announce it to my father. As I am of age, I have a right to act on my own judgment, and I am persuaded that for them, for you, and for myself, I am doing what is best and wisest.

I have been for some years a source of sorrow and anxiety to my parents, and often a cause of dissension between them. Jacques will certainly be elected deputy I hear, thanks to your father's exertions, and, in his new position and interests, they will find a compensation for my absence, if, indeed, any is needed.

As to you, poor child, on whom was thrust the saddest of all destinies, a union with one whom you could not look on without detestation, I hope that life will still have some charms, though I admit that your fate is a melancholy one. I have begged my father and my brother to arrange with your parents all that regards my fortune, which I wish to leave entirely to you, with the exception of a small annuity, which will suffice for my wants and tastes.

We sail on Saturday morning, and in taking leave of France and all I have ever known or cared for, my chief hope and prayer are that you, whose existence I have involuntary blighted, may still enjoy peaceful and happy days. If I was an infidel, or a philosopher of the school of our modern novelists, I would gladly put myself altogether out of your way. But as I am a Christian, though a very imperfect one, we must each bear our separate burthens, and drag on life as best we may.

May God bless you, Rose.

Sincerely yours,
GEORGE DE VEDELLES.

Aunt Mede pushed her spectacles off her nose when she had read this letter and ejaculated, "Foolish boy." Rose, who was crying, snatched it from her and said, "No, not foolish, Aunt Mede. It is a very generous and kind letter, only—only it breaks my heart."

"There is no need at all for any heart-breaking, silly child. Even if we cannot stop the departure of M. le Baron, and if he was to remain two years in the South Seas, that would not be the world's end, nor your life's end either. You are, let me see, not much more than seventeen. Dear me! perhaps that is the best thing he could have done. He may come back before you are twenty, and you will both be wiser then."

"Two years, Aunt Mede, two years would be like two centuries. O dear, Aunt Mede, can't we stop him? You see that he is going away because he thinks I hate him, and if he was to be shipwrecked and drowned, or cast on a desert island like Robinson Crusoe, I should never forgive myself."

"Well, child, I suppose the only thing to be done is to go to Marseilles and to call on Mdlle. Lantard, who has the wisest head on her shoulders of any woman I know, and if your husband has not yet sailed, to see if between her and your Aunt Mede, some means to stop him may be devised. You and I, Rose, will find ourselves rather in a scrape, if M. George made this *coup de tête* and we have told neither his parents nor yours of his having left you some days ago. You see, my little girl, I was afraid of their falling out. Your father and mother, I mean, and the Count and Countess, or of their all mismanaging him."

"They would have been sure to do so, Aunt Mede; that would have been the worst thing that could happen to us. Now there is hope if only he has not sailed. Let us lose no time. May I tell Simon to fetch two mules to take us to Cassio, where we shall meet the Marseilles diligence? If he will but make haste, they will be here in an hour."

"Very well," Mise Mede said; and at the end of two hours—for Rose had miscalculated the capabilities of old Simon's legs—the mules stood at the door, with their jingling bells and large, wide saddles, ornamented with red tassels, and Dominique the driver, stood alongside of them, a tall tanned, fierce-looking man, with a brown complexion and tangled black hair.

Rose had known him from her childhood, and was consequently on familiar terms with them.

"Make haste, Dominique," she exclaimed; "we must be at Marseilles before dinner time."

"You will be at Cassio, Mise Rose, in three hours; that I undertake. As to Marseilles, it is no business of mine."

"Are you going to walk all the way to Cassio?"

"Of course; my legs are, if anything, stronger than theirs," he added, patting affectionately the mules, which had certainly worked hard in their day. Then he hoisted Rose's little figure on her saddle as lightly as if she had been a bird, his dark complexion and wild attire contrasting with her delicate features and peach-like coloring in a way which would have delighted a painter.

Old Simon the while was helping Mise Mede to climb up to the back of the other mule, and they then set out at a kind of trot, Dominique keeping up with them at a pace between a walk and a run. Rose felt as though she would have wished for wings, to bear her more rapidly to Marseilles, and Mise Mede was obliged now and then to remind her that her old limbs could not stand this unmitigated speed.

As the little party was leaving the lane which led from Belbousquet into the path across the hills to Cassio, they met a peasant, who stopped Rose's mule, and said: "Madame, are you Madame de Vedelles? I am one of the gardeners at La Pinede."

"Yea. What do you want with me?"

"I have come to let M. George know—M. le Baron George, I mean—that M. Vincent, poor old gentleman, was seized last night with an attack of paralysis, and M. le Docteur says he has not long to live. He is quite conscious, poor dear man, but can speak very little. He keeps asking for M. George, and it is piteous to see him watching the door, and with the one hand he can move making the sign of the cross, and throwing up his eyes to heaven. M. le Cure has been to see him, but he will not hear of being anointed till he has seen M. George, so I have come to fetch him: M. le Cure sent me. The girl who was sick went home last week; her room has been stripped and purified. M. le Cure told me to say that there was no danger, and he wishes M. George to come without delay, for the old man may die any moment. He is conscious in a sort of way, but now quite reasonable like, and it's no use preaching to him whilst he frets about seeing M. George. M. and Madame and M. Jacques are perhaps coming home to-morrow, but by that time, 'tis ten to one, M. Vincent will be dead."

"Oh, Aunt Mede," Rose exclaimed, "I am so sorry! I know

George loves very much that old man. There is something so pretty he wrote about him on one of those scraps of paper I picked up in his room. It began, 'Old, Vincent, thou alone hast known.' How sad if he died without seeing him again, and all the family with whom he has lived fifty years away."

Mise Mede fixed her eyes on Rose, those earnest, powerful eyes, which seemed to speak her thought, and Rose's filled with tears.

"Come, my child: what are you going to do?" Mdlle. Lescalle asked, and anxiously waited the answer.

"Do you think, Aunt Mede, I might go to La Pinede with this good man who has brought the message, and will you go on to Marseilles with Dominique?"

"By all means," Mise Mede replied. "It was what I wanted you to do, Rosette. Here, Dominique, give Madame de Vedelles her bag; she is going the other way."

Rose had jumped off her saddle, and coming close to Mise Mede's mule, she threw her arms round her, looked up in her face, and said: "Kiss me, Aunt Mede."

"God bless you, my darling," the old lady said, bending down her venerable face to press her lips on Rose's white forehead. "Go, and do your best with that poor old faithful servant, and tell him that he must think of God first, and of his young master afterwards. Get him to receive the last sacraments, and who knows what may follow? Yes, yes, little woman, I know the meaning of that beseeching look. Rely on your old Aunt Mede. What can be done will be done; but remember who it is that holds the reins aloft, and knows better than we do every turn of life's road. What He does is well done, Rosy; so be off, my brave child, and do your duty. Many a more dreary ride have I taken than this one of thine—in old days, when life and death were at stake. Say your beads as you jog on, and hope for the best."

A fond embrace was given, and the old woman and the young one parted, and went on their way, each with a holy purpose, each with a silent prayer.

When some hours afterwards, Mdlle. Lescalle arrived at Marseilles, she went straight from the diligence to Mdlle. Lautard's house, but found her out. What next was to be done? It was quite uncertain when she would come home. There seemed nothing to do but wait. Waiting is hard at such moments, and she determined to try and find George de Vedelles. As Mdlle. Lautard's servants did not know where M. de Belmont lived, Mise Mede walked to the Admiralty, and there obtained his direction. Off she went to the house, the address of which had been given her, and rung the bell. She did not ask herself what she should say to George de Vedelles if she should find him at home. She thought that the promise made to God's servants, that He will put into their mouths the words they should speak when they appear before kings to bear witness to the truth, in a certain degree applies to all who plead the cause of right against wrong, of justice against injustice, even in the secret struggles of domestic life, and the obscure trials of individual souls. She could form no plan, she could find no words which might not prove entirely misplaced, according to the nature and state of mind of one she knew so little of as this strange young man, who had inspired once such aversion to the wife upon whom he had been forced, but for whom she now felt so evident an affection that if he did not return to her the bloom of her young life would vanish.

The bell was at last answered. M. de Belmont had left two days before, and gone on board his uncle's ship, which was to set sail that evening. Mise Mede's heart beat very fast.

"And the Baron George de Vedelles, is he at home?" she asked, with intense anxiety.

"No, madame; he is also on board the *Jean Bart*, that is to say, he slept there last night. He called here for his letters two hours ago. M. le Baron embarks also to-night for America, with M. le Comte de Belmont."

"How soon do you suppose will the ship sail?" Mdlle. Lescalle asked.

"I cannot tell exactly, madame; but I suppose towards sunset."

"How long would it take to get to it?"

"I cannot tell, madame; it lies at some distance in the bay. Dear me, M. le Comte's own servant was here just now. He would have known; but the sailors at the port, not far off, would be able to inform madame."

Mise Mede returned to Mdlle. Lautard's house, and there heard that she would perhaps find her at the military hospital, where there was much sickness just then—she helped the Sisters of Charity to nurse the soldiers.

These words made the thought flash through her mind that Denise—Sœur Denise—might be found there also, and thither she hurried with a speed wonderful at her age. Again, there was a weary time spent in the waiting-room, after sending a message to Mdlle. Lautard to say that she was there, and wished to see her on pressing business. At last she came, that good, brave woman, with her bright, fine face, her slightly hump-backed figure, so well known in Marseilles, and her cheering smile.

"My dear, dear old friend, is it you? I wrote to you yesterday that I had discovered M. de Belmont's address, and would try and see him on your business as soon as I could. Has anything happened since you wrote?"

"Yes, my good Amelie, a letter from George Vedelles came, announcing his immediate departure for America. He leaves Marseilles this evening with M. de Belmont in the *Jean Bart*."

"You take my breath away, my dear; but tell me quick, you still want to stop him?"

"Yes; for all sorts of reasons. It is a simple misunderstanding between those poor children—both so young, both so wrongly dealt with; a poor old servant at La Pinede is also dying, and sending for him. Rose is gone to him. My dear Amelie, all might still come right if we could stop him. But how to write a message, how to write a letter which would have that effect, and every moment is precious."

"Let us call Sœur Denise: she knows him, and we don't. I said something about him to her the other day. She told me that he is rather a strange youth, but with a great deal that is good in him, and cleverness too, she thinks, which none of his family seemed to suspect. Stop a minute, I will ask her to come and speak to you."

In a few minutes Sœur Denise came in with Mdlle. Lautard. Mise Mede, as she looked at the beautiful face under the white *cornette*, that face George de Vedelles had painted with marvellous talent, said to herself, "No wonder he cared for her," and there was a twinge in her heart as she thought that even her own dear, pretty, little Rose's loveliness could not stand comparison with the matchless face, the lovely figure, the commanding and at the same time most gentle beauty of that daughter of St. Vincent de Paul, that humble servant of the poor.

Seated between Mise Mede and Mdlle. Lautard, Sœur Denise listened like a compassionating angel to the story, briefly told, of those two young creatures whose fate was concerned in Mise Mede's present efforts, and when the latter ejaculated, "How to explain in a few words the whole of this strange case? How to indicate it in a way that would stop him just as the anchor is about to weigh, and he fancies he is doing right to go?"

"Would the news of the old servant's danger prevail upon him?" Sœur Denise asked.

"It might, or it might not; he might even suspect a trick to prevent his departure."

Sœur Denise leant her brow on her hands, and thought a little; then she looked up with her bright, serious smile, and said: "What a blessing it is to have given up the world! A Sister of Charity can do what a young lady could not have done. Wait a minute, I must have one word with *ma sœur*, and then perhaps we may be able to stop this mad departure."

She left the room, and soon returned with a letter in her hand, which she placed in Mise Mede's hands. It contained these words:

M. le Baron—Your old servant Vincent is dangerously ill, and asks for you. Give up your voyage, and go to him. You prom-

used me that if I came to the Chapel of La Pinede on the last day of May, you would grant any request of mine, whatever it might be. I was there, and I now claim your promise.

DENISE DE LA PINÈDE,
Fille de Charité.

Hopital Militaire.

"God bless you, Sœur Denise," Mise Mede exclaimed with tears in her eyes; "but let me just tell you that I am afraid of his going straight to La Pinede, and finding Rose, without having heard anything to enlighten him as to her present feelings towards him."

Sœur Denise took up a pen, and added this postscript: "Come first to the hospital. There are important reasons for this."

"Will you speak to him, Sœur Denise? Will you be the angel of peace that will reconcile him to his young wife? He never could resist you, I feel sure of that."

"I am not going to be an angel at all in the matter," Sœur Denise answered, with that playful simplicity so common amongst the Sisters of Charity. "If *ma sœur* approves of it, I have no objection to see the young Baron, and to give him a good scolding. Oh, here comes our messenger. Shall the note go as it is, Mdlle. Lescalle, or will you add anything to it?"

"Oh, no," both Mise Mede and Mdlle. Lautard exclaimed; and the missive was placed in the hands of a young sailor belonging to one of Sœur Denise's poor families, who promised not to lose a minute in conveying it to the gentleman on board the *Jean Bart*.

The bells of Notre Dame de la Garde were ringing the *Angelus*; the softened sound of their chimes floated in the transparent air as the setting sun was sinking into a bed of rosy-colored clouds, leaving behind it that bright, lingering light which is so striking on a summer's evening on the Mediterranean Sea.

George de Vedelles was standing on the deck of the vessel, which in another hour was to weigh anchor. Sunk into a deep reverie, he was thinking at that moment of three persons, two of whom would grieve at his departure, and one who would not know of it, or if she did, never give it a thought. There was his mother. He loved her very much. When she had been ill after her accident, his misery had showed him how strong was that love. But there had been a bitter feeling in his heart for many a long day, which had saddened his affection for her. She had been tender, very tender, to him, very gentle and kind; she had grieved at his father's harshness, and tried to make up for it; but she had not the least understood either his character, his state of health, or his sufferings of mind.

Just as much as M. de Vedelles and Jacques, she had looked upon him since his illness as a sort of grown-up child, or a nervous invalid, without energy or will or intellect. She had plottcd with the others too to bring about his marriage, that marriage which had caused him such bitter humiliations. She had, indeed, had scruples on the subject, but they had been expressed too late to avail. But after resolving to abandon his home and the wife that had been forced upon him, and on whom he had been forced, now, at the last moment, the thought of his mother's sorrow haunted him. It had done so the whole of that day, but when in a *café*, where he had breakfasted, he had taken up the newspaper, and read the news of his brother's election as Deputy des Bouches du Rhone, his heart had hardened again for a while. They all had what they had striven for, and schemed for—Jacques his seat, his parents the full gratification of their pride in him, M. Lescalle a good settlement and the title of Baronne for his daughter. It was all as it should be, and no one had any right to complain.

"Poor old Vincent will be sorry," he thought. "Except my mother, he is the only creature in the world who really cares for me. I shall write to him from the first place we stop at." His eyes, which were wandering over the busy town he was about to leave, fixed themselves at that moment on a square ugly building which he knew well by sight, the military hospital. "Well, who knows but I may tread in her footsteps; who knows that I may not some day do as she is doing, live for God alone and the poor."

It was not the first time that thought had struck him since he had left Belbousquet. The fact was that his conscience was not completely satisfied with his reasoning, and had now and then given signs of protesting, which it was necessary to lull and the dream of a sublime vocation to be hereafter followed, proved useful as an anodyne to troublesome doubts.

These deep musings were interrupted by M. de Belmont's voice, who cried to him from the opposite side of the deck. "George, here is a sailor-boy who has brought a letter for you with 'immediate' written upon it."

The blood rushed to George's face and brow. He had no doubt some of his family, or his wife's relations, had written to stop his departure, and all the combativeness of his nature was roused. He felt almost inclined not to read the letter before the ship sailed. Then the fear that his mother might be ill crossed him. "Good God!" he immediately exclaimed, "I cannot run such a risk," and he advanced to meet the boy, who held out the letter to him.

The instant he saw the handwriting his heart began to beat violently. When he had read the few lines addressed to him, he looked pale and agitated, but did not for a moment hesitate. Going straight up to M. de Belmont, he said; "Aloys, you will think me a very strange person, but I must go back. I cannot start with you. I have had bad news."

"Your parents?"

"No; our old servant Vincent is dangerously ill, and asks for me. I must be with him before he dies."

"Well, if it had been one of your family, my dear fellow—but really, I cannot see—. After you had made up your mind that you had such strong reasons for leaving France, it does seem rather changeable. I am afraid my uncle will be annoyed. He did not want to take you. I had to argue, to urge, even to exaggerate the importance of your absentsing yourself for some time, to induce him to consent; and now, half an hour before sailing—"

"I cannot help it, Aloys."

"Oh, of course, poets are endowed with wonderful sensibility, and are very wayward also; but I think this is really an exaggerated amount of feeling. If all you have tried to convince me of is the case—if you are determined not to return to your wife—"

"Quite as determined as ever—"

"Why, then, you are preparing for yourself and her all sorts of disagreeable scenes, which you so strongly argued you wished to avoid. Come, write a kind note to this poor old man, and do not in a moment give up what you took days to decide on."

"I cannot explain to you, Aloys, all the circumstances of the case. There is a promise in question, and I am bound in honor as well as feeling to go this very moment on shore."

"Who sent this note?"

"A Sister of Charity," George replied, commanding his emotion. Turning to the young sailor, he said, "I will return with you in your boat. Aloys, let my portmanteau and bag be handed down. Good-bye, dear and kind friend; do not judge me severely; I am not as wayward as you think."

"Well, stop a minute; I must give you, if you are really going, a letter I received just now from Paris. It contains some good news, enough to turn your head. Good heaven! there is the first signal given; we shall be off in a few minutes. God bless you, old fellow! Write to me."

In half an hour George de Vedelles entered the waiting-room of the military hospital. It was full of people, and sisters in white *cornettes* flitted across it now and then, speaking one moment to one person and then to another. Some one came up to him and asked him whom he was waiting to see. He stammered out, "Sœur Denise." "She will be here in a moment," was the reply, and he sat down again with a strange sort of wonder that he was going to see Denise again, in such a new scene and under such different circumstances. Each *cornette* that appeared at the door he watched with anxiety. At last one did appear, and under it the beautiful face he had so worshipped. It was not changed—not at all changed, and yet it looked different, or else

he looked upon it with different feelings. He was less agitated than before she had entered the room. He looked at her for some time previously to her seeing him.

She was leading by the hand two little children who had been visiting their father, a sick soldier and telling the person who had brought them to come again in a week's time. Then she turned to an old man, sitting with his chin resting on his stick, and joked and laughed with him till she made him look merry; and next she examined papers presented to her by a pale soldier with his arm in a sling, and gave him directions about the office where he was to apply for admission. Yes, she looked just as beautiful as ever; and each poor person who spoke to her seemed to hang on her words as if there had been in them a spell to bring them relief. It was delightful to watch her, as with a light step, a clear voice, and a pretty resolute manner, she got through her business with each of those who had asked for her. But as he watched and gazed, George felt that a change had come over Denise de la Pinede, which unconsciously was changing also the feelings with which he looked upon her. The wild, the agitating, the sentimental worship with which he had regarded the girl who, like an angel of beauty and brightness, had visited her ancestral home, and roused in him the first emotions of a romantic affection, seemed to disappear like magic in the presence of the earnest, business-like, serene, sweet-faced Sister of Charity. They melted away in the healthy sunshine of her joyous, placid countenance as the white frost disappears from the pane where it had formed fanciful pictures. By this time she perceived him, and coming up to him with a smile, said:

"Oh, M. le Baron, I wanted to speak to you."

George felt quite calm and composed.

"You must excuse me," Sœur Denise said, "if I doubted for an instant that a dying person's wish to see you, and that person an old man who has loved you from a child, would be sufficient to decide you to give up your departure. Excuse me for having thought it necessary to claim the fulfilment of a rash promise, which you had probably by this time forgotten."

"I have forgotten nothing," George answered, "and I thank you for having made it impossible for me to hesitate between two duties which seemed equally imperative."

"That of consoling Vincent on his death-bed, and the other? What was that other duty, M. George?"

There was a sort of smile on Denise's face, a look of amusement in her dark, bright eyes, which piqued George, and he answered with a heightened color:

"May I ask, *ma sœur*, if in writing to claim the fulfilment of my promise, and stopping my departure, you were actuated by the sole desire that I should visit poor Vincent on his death-bed?"

"No, M. le Baron, I wished also to save you from committing a wrong and foolish action."

"What do you mean? How can you judge of my reasons? You do not even know what where my intentions."

"I know this much, that you are married to a virtuous and amiable girl, and that without her consent—without the knowledge of your parents, to whom you owe respect, if not obedience; you are acting on pure impulse, and abandoning your home, your wife, and your duties in a fit of anger or despondency."

There was something so severe in the expression of Sœur Denise's countenance, that George quailed beneath her glance. He had once looked upon her as an angel sent to console him when his mother's illness was breaking his heart. Now she seemed like a heavenly messenger commissioned to upbraid him. He felt half indignant, half subdued. His cheek was flushed and his brow contracted. He burst forth in a tone of voice as loud as was compatible with the fear of being heard by some of the groups scattered about the room, and began to justify himself. He spoke of having been forced to marry a girl he did not care for. Sœur Denise interrupted him and said:

"No force should have compelled you to do that, M. George; you are a perfectly truthful person, and I am sure you will not venture to say that it was not optional for you to resist the pressure put upon you."

"My parents were bent on this marriage."

"If you were bound to obey them then, what right have you now to fly in their faces by forsaking the wife they have given you?"

"She hates me, and I can never love her."

"Are you sure she hates you? Have you tried to love her? Have you tried to make her love you? Have you forgot that you are bound to her by the vows you made before God's altar, and that you have no right to deal with her as with a stranger? M. le Baron, you are a man of honor; you would not have broken a promise you gave me, half in joke, perhaps, and you deliberately break one you made to protect and cherish this young girl whom God has committed to your keeping, and for whose soul you will have to answer, if, abandoned at the age of seventeen to all the temptations of youth and inexperience, she should stray from the path of virtue and honor. You have not thought of this; you have been deluding yourself; you have been on the point of committing a great sin. Thank God that He has saved you from it. Oh, M. de Vedelles, how blind you have been! how nearly wicked without knowing it!"

"She hates me, and my wish was to deliver her from the presence of one whom she looks upon with aversion."

Sœur Denise made a little gesture of impatience, and said:

"Because a child like your young wife turned her back upon you once and vexed you, are both your lives to be wretched? Do your duty: leave the rest to God. Would I had still, as some hours ago, the right to command you!"

"Sœur Denise," George exclaimed with emotion, "listen to me; I am not so bad as you think me. I really thought what I meant to do was best for Rose, and my plans were not selfish. I left her all the means of enjoyment I renounced, and my intention was to offer myself to work with the Catholic missionaries in the South Sea Islands, and lead, far away from Europe, the sort of life you are leading here."

Sœur Denise could not repress a smile.

"My dear M. de Vedelles," she replied, "that was a very fine dream, but it is God alone who can call people to lives of this sort, not their own deluded fancies. You have before you your path traced out. It may still be a happy one."

George shook his head.

"You can make it a happy one if you choose, even if it was full of trials and sorrows. But earthly happiness may still be yours, if you do not thrust it from you. I have a great mind to tell you a secret, in two words, for I must be off. That little wife of yours—you know I have never told a lie in my life, even for a good object—I say, your wife loves you, and is breaking her heart at your leaving her. Good-bye, M. de Vedelles! Give my kind regards to M. Vincent, and tell him that Sœur Denise will offer up her communion for him to-morrow."

As she passed through the passage into the wards, Sœur Denise met Mademoiselle Lescalle, who had been praying during the whole time of the interview. She took her by the hand and led her to the window. It was getting dark, but they could see George hurrying down the street leading to the Bureau des Diligences.

"There he goes," she whispered to Mise Mede.

"Does he know he will find Rose at La Pinede?"

"No, I thought it better not to tell him so. I think all will be right; but now we must leave the rest to our good God, and hope for the best."

CHAPTER XX.

ROSE AT LA PINEDE.

It was about five o'clock in the morning when George de Vedelles got out of the diligence at the place where the cross-roads which led to La Pinede branched off from the high-road. The sun was rising, and the birds beginning to sing. After the jolting and the dust of the drive in the diligence there was something wonderfully refreshing in the morning air and the

quiet stillness of the olive and orange groves through which he walked on his way to the chateau. During the hours of darkness in the coupe of the diligence he had meditated on his conversation with *Sieur Denise*, and marveled at the change which he felt had come over him. He had so often indulged in walking dreams, of which she had been the object, that he could hardly realize having actually seen and spoken to her, looked in her face, and listened to her voice with so little emotion. What had become of that passion which still, a few hours ago, had seemed so strong? He hardly liked to acknowledge to himself the change which he could not but feel had taken place in the nature of his feelings. It was a relief to have seen her, and not to have grudged her to God and the poor, but the very relief of this change seemed to leave a void behind it. He had often called her in his solitary musings his *Beatrice*, and compared her to the heavenly object of *Dante's* poetic worship. He tried to reawaken in himself this vision—but no, he could not recall it such as he had so often conjured it up in the shades of night, or amidst the sunshiny hills, or on the solitary sea shore.

Instead of it he saw the image of another *Denise*, one beautiful indeed and lovable as ever, but unlike the ideal *Denise* of his waking dreams. She walked this earth doing good, that holy and lovely *Sister of Charity*. She carried dirty children in her arms, joked and laughed, and moreover she had laughed at him, *George de Vedelles*, and scolded him, and held cheap his romantic plans of heroic self-devotion.

This all told on his feelings: she knew what she was about, that artful *Sœur Denise*, and she had produced the very effect which she had intended. Then those last few words she had said, that secret she had let out. Had it not also done its work? did they not occur and re-occur to *George's* mind during that night which seemed so long in the rumbling vehicle, and did they not haunt him yet more as he walked in the dawning light of morn up the hills leading to *La Pinede*?

"Your wife loves you!" Could that be possible? He had so much faith in *Denise* that he could not doubt that she had grounds for what she said; and if so, did not the whole position of affairs change between him and *Rose*?

As the glorious sun of the south rose higher and higher in the horizon, and Nature seemed to hail its beams, so did a feeling of unwonted warmth and joy expand in a heart that had been embittered into hardness, and clouded with dark shadows.

Suppose she did love him, that pretty little *Rose*; suppose she had a heart and mind capable of corresponding with the deeper thoughts and aspirations which had been struggling into life in his own soul since *Denise's* vocation and *Toinette's* death-bed had roused its latent faith, would not happiness be possible? was not night breaking on the future, which had hitherto seemed so hopeless?

Such were *George's* thoughts as he approached *La Pinede*. The gate was unlocked, and he walked up the avenue at a rapid pace and with an earnest hope that poor old *Vincent* would still be alive and conscious of his arrival.

The door of the house was also open; he walked into the hall, and then looked into the drawing-room. The sight which met his eyes took him by surprise. On his mother's sofa near the chimney, *Rose*, in her walking dress, was lying asleep, looking like a beautiful child, with her fair hair about her face, and her dark eye-lashes wet with tears. Her head was resting on one of her small hands, and the other was laid on an open book by her side.

George approached her with a beating heart, and, treading as softly as he could, he gazed at the lovely sleeping face with irrepressible emotion. "And does she love me?" he said to himself. "Oh, my God," he murmured, kneeling down by the couch; "let it be so," and tears streamed down his face. His eyes fell on the open book. It was the life of *St. Elizabeth of Hungary*, and the little hand upon it was placed on the lines he had written on the margin of one of the pages.

How much was revealed by the choice and the position of that book! He felt it; and an irresistible impulse made him bend down and kiss the hand of his young wife. *Rose* opened her

large blue eyes, and when she saw *George's* face close to hers she rubbed those lovely blue eyes, and said, "It is a dream!" and turned her head on the pillow as if she wished to go to asleep again.

"Sleep on, dear *Rose*," he whispered; "I shall come back when I have seen *Vincent*."

The words, though breathed so low that he thought she could hardly have heard them, made her start up on the couch, and looking him in the face she stared at him a moment, and then said—

"Wait—wait; I must tell you—I must speak to you first—before you go upstairs."

"Am I too late? Oh, poor old *Vincent*! Is he dead?"

And as *Rose* did not answer, but took his hand in hers, and he felt her hot tears falling upon them, he knew it was so, and sobbed like a child.

"George, dear *George*," she said, still holding his hand in hers, "be comforted; he died so peacefully—just after receiving Holy Communion; *M. le Cure* gave him the last absolution and blessing; the dear old man said to me, 'You will tell *M. George* that I have had the last sacraments, and ask him to pray for me.'"

"Oh, you good little angel," *George* exclaimed; "you were with him, then, and he did not die uncomfortable?"

"Till I arrived he would not listen to *M. le Cure*, and kept calling for you. But it seemed to calm him when I came and spoke of you. He wanted to send you a message."

"What message was it?"

Rose colored deeply, turned her head away, and was silent.

"I cannot tell you now; another time, perhaps."

"I guess what it was," *George* said gently, taking her hand in his, and making her turn towards him. "Was it to tell me that we are to love one another?"

Rose blushed, and *George* kissed her for the first time; then, taking her hand, he said—

"Let us go up together, my wife, and pray by the side of our dear old friend, and promise God that we shall do what he wished. Shall we not love each other, *Rose*, and together serve God?"

"Like the good Duke *Louis* and his dear *St. Elizabeth*," *Rose* said, pointing to the volume on the sofa.

George smiled through his tears, and they went up together to the room where old *Vincent's* body was laid out, with a crucifix on his breast, and fresh flowers, gathered by *Rose*, at his feet. There they renewed their marriage vows, and prayed a long time side by side.

It was five o'clock in the morning when they came down stairs and went out on the terrace, where the birds were singing, and the gentle morning breeze stirred the branches of the acacias. One of the maid-servants, who had found out *George's* arrival, and seen him from the kitchen crossing the hall, asked if they would have coffee under the trees, and something to eat, an offer which they gladly accepted, for the fatigues and emotions of the last few hours had rather exhausted them. The meal was a silent one. Their hearts were too full for speech, but how different was that silence from that of their meals at *Belbousquet*. Now and then their eyes met, and then on *Rose's* cheeks, which were paler than usual, a deep color suddenly rose, and made her look prettier than ever.

He could hardly believe she was the same girl he once thought so uninteresting, and in truth never had a greater change perhaps taken place in so short a time than the last few weeks had wrought in his young wife.

They had awakened in her new feelings of a double sort, strong religious impressions, and a human affection, pure, and hallowed by a sacred tie. The light of faith had shown on her soul like a sunbeam, and a timid love for her husband had arisen simultaneously. No wonder that her countenance was transfigured, no wonder that the commonplace prettiness of a thoughtless girl had become womanly beauty of a higher order. Suffering had paled her cheek, and she had grown thinner, but it had given a tenderness to her soft eyes, and a sweetness to her smile, which touched and captivated *George*. As to *Rose*, it was not

quite so new to her to admire George's dark eyes and thoughtful brow. She remembered how often by stealth she had looked at him at Belbousquet. She thought of those melancholy moments when nothing but a few cold unmeaning words passed their lips, and enjoyed a silence which seemed to express more than either of them could utter just then.

But when the meal was finished they held a consultation, still sitting under the acacia trees. What should they do? George's parents were expected that evening at La Pinede. Should they wait for them or return to Belbousquet? Rose blushed and said, "What would you like to do?"

"What I should like," he said, "would be to stroll slowly, very slowly, through the woods to our little villa to borrow for your Matthias' donkey which we can bring back to-morrow, to take with us some provisions and dine in the olive grove by the side of a well I have often sketched to rest at noon in the shade, and arrive at home late in the afternoon."

Rose did not answer: a large tear rolled down her cheek and fell on one of the wallflowers she held in her hand. George took the flowers from her and said—

"What makes you cry, Rose? Do tell me, I want to know."

"It is nothing," she said, raising her tearful eyes to his, and smiling. "I am so glad you are come back," and she gently laid her hand on his with so deep a blush that for a moment she looked as rosy as ever.

"But, then, why do you cry?" he asked again kissing her small hand.

"Oh, I cannot explain it."

"But you ought to tell me: you know that I must always be your best friend, your comforter, Rose."

She smiled, and said, "I cried very often during those days at Belbousquet, only you did not notice it."

"Oh, will you ever forgive the odious, sulky, unkind wretch who treated you so ill, who was so cold and so unjust to you, who was determined to think you hated him? Oh, my dear Rose, you will never know, you will never understand——"

He hid his face in his hands and remained silent.

"George," she gently said, "I know—I understand it all. I know what you have felt—what you have suffered, and I am glad that it was one so good, so holy that you loved. We can think of her and speak of her together as if she was an angel protecting us."

George looked up greatly surprised. "Who told you about her? How did you hear?"

"Oh, if you knew how I have gazed on her picture, wishing I had been like her, and repeated to myself those lines beginning, 'If thou hadst been the guiding light.'"

"You are a little witch, Rose," George exclaimed, rather agitated. "no one but myself ever knew of those lines."

"Oh, sir, it took a long time to put together the little bits of paper scattered on the grass behind the old bench," Rose said with a smile.

"So you know all and you forgive me. Then you are a perfect angel," he exclaimed.

"Oh, no," she answered, "it is so easy to forgive when one is happy, and I think you have also something to forgive."

George looked up anxiously. "Had you, Rose, cared——"

"For any one else before I married you? Oh, no, never; but, George, that look when you spoke to me at the Capucins, which made you write that terrible letter, I am so sorry I ever looked at you in that way."

"Never mind how you looked at me then, Rose, so that you will often look at me as you are doing now."

And thus they talked on for some time and then George went to order the donkey and to store a basket with their noonday meal.

Rose sat on, wondering at the change which a few short hours had effected in her life. The scenes of the last night imparted a solemn and affecting character to this new-found happiness. Old Vincent's dying wish was amply fulfilled. She looked up at the windows of the room where the old man had died, and breathed a prayer for his soul. Just then the sound of a horse's feet in the

avenue startled her, and turning her eyes that way she saw a man trotting up the avenue. As he reached the bottom of the terrace she saw him tie his horse to a tree, and rapidly mount the steps.

It was Artemon Richer. He came up to her with a broad smile on his face, and began with great volubility to express his anxiety at hearing that she was alone at La Pinede, and that some one had died there in the night."

"It was a horrible thing," he said, "that all this anxiety and trouble should have devolved upon her. He had heard at Belbousquet where he had called to pay his respects, that M. le Baron was absent from home, that none of his family were at La Pinede, and M. Lescaze on an electioneering tour, and it had occurred to him that the services of a friend might be acceptable, or, at any rate," he added with a deep sigh, and a very sentimental expression of countenance, "the intense sympathy of one who could never cease to feel a most respectful solicitude for her happiness, and an ardent desire to relieve her of any cares or trouble which, in her loneliness, must so heavily weigh upon her mind."

Rose—partly from fatigue, and partly from the sad and then joyful emotions she had undergone—was in that state where tears and laughter are both readily excited. There was something so ridiculous in the affectation of profound sensibility which the jolly and impudent Artemon assumed, and which suited so ill with his broad, handsome, but vulgar face, that her risible nerves were stimulated beyond control, and to hide that she was bursting with laughter she put her handkerchief before her mouth. The sight of the handkerchief raised to her face instantly convinced Artemon that she was deeply affected by his sympathy, and he was beginning a speech with the exclamation of—"Ah, madame," the sequel of which was abruptly cut short by the appearance of George, who came out of the house to announce that the donkey was at the door, and the basket of provisions ready.

He started at the sight of Artemon, and so did that gentleman. Rose stood up, and commanding her countenance as well as she could, she said to her husband—

"M. Richer called to offer me his services about the arrangements with regard to poor Vincent's funeral. It was very kind of him. He did not know you had returned."

The corners of Rose's little mouth gave visible signs that she would not be able much longer to keep her countenance.

George, on the contrary, made a very formal courteous bow to M. Richer, and thanked him for his civility with a self-possession and dignity of manner that took the disappointed Artemon entirely by surprise.

"Oh, of course," he said, "as M. le Baron was at home there could be no occasion for any other assistance. Still, if he could be of any use, he hoped, as a neighbor, they would command his services——" and for once in his life Artemon became confused, and broke off in the middle of his civil speech rather abruptly, and with a heightened color.

George spoke calmly and civilly to the embarrassed visitor, hinted that his wife and himself must at once set out on their homeward way, and begged him to excuse their leaving him, at the same time begging him to rest his horse and take some refreshment.

As Rose looked at these two men as they stood side by side, and contrasted the vulgar, gigantic bourgeois with the refined, pale, and sensitive young man of high birth and gentle breeding who was speaking to him, the thought of all she had escaped, of all that had been given to her, rushed upon her mind, and this time it was tears, not laughter, she had to hide.

Artemon bowed departed, and rode down the avenue. Once he looked back, and the picture which met his eyes was, Rose mounted on her donkey and George passing the bridle on his arm. He saw her lovely face turned toward her husband with a look of inexpressible sweetness and peaceful contentment, and his attitude of unmistakable fond attention to his little wife. Did this sight enrage him, or did it give him an entirely new idea as to love and marriage—an idea tending to make him a somewhat better man, and possibly, when he, too, married later on, a better

husband than he would otherwise have been. We cannot tell; seeds are sometimes sown on unpromising soil which bear unexpected fruits. Perhaps Artemon Richer derived some faint notion of the sanctity and beauty of wedded love from the glimpse he had of it that day.

CHAPTER XXI.

A STROLL THROUGH THE WOODS.

THERE are hours, even on earth, of nearly perfect happiness. Such were those during which George de Vedelles and his wife rode and walked across the beautiful hills and through the woods which separated La Pinede from Belbousquet: their hearts had been softened by their sorrow at old Vincent's death, and were prepared to welcome happiness in a spirit not of wild excitement, but of humble and peaceful joy. Every moment they became more and more at ease with each other.

The deep solitude of those shady groves; the perfume which the thyme, trodden under the donkey's feet exhaled; the fitful play of the sunshine on the green sward, the hum of the wild bees, seemed to chime in with the glad thoughts which both were dwelling on during moments of silence which seemed to unite their souls even more closely than conversation. They often thus remained without speaking, and it was not till they made their mid-day halt by the side of the well George had described, that they talked much to one another. There, sitting on the moss, he told Rose the whole history of his past life. He described to her all he had suffered from the day that—recovering from what had appeared a hopeless illness—he had begun to regain physical strength by slow degrees, and at the same time felt a deadly weight oppressing his mental faculties and his moral energies to a degree which made exertion impossible, but at the same time left him in full possession of his imaginative powers, which seemed to thrive like wild flowers in a fallow soil. "Like those wild flowers," he said, "which run over the waste grounds of La Pinede, and which for that reason I loved and pitted when——"

"When I said they ought to be rooted out. Oh, George, I have learnt so much since then. But go on, tell me all about that time of your life."

"Well, I got into the habit of taking long solitary walks; I never felt happy except when alone in the woods and the narrow valleys round Valsec. I liked to remain whole days lying down on a mossy bank, listening to the noise of the wind amongst the fir trees, and gazing on the magnificent outline of the Jura mountains. How many evenings, too, I spent gazing at the stars through the quivering branches above my head; the sights and sounds of nature in those wild solitudes filled me with new thoughts, new emotions, new perceptions, and, I may say, new powers, for though I had lost the use of faculties which had been overstrained before my illness, God seemed mercifully to make up for it by turning my mind in another direction. I discovered that I possessed a talent I had, till then, been unconscious of. I felt that I was meant to be a poet. But I could not speak to others of this gift. A sort of strange, wayward reserve took possession of my soul and made me averse to disclose what sometimes I feared was only a self-deception, a childish illusion. I dreaded my mother's questions, my father's scorn, my brother's ridicule. Meanwhile, my devotion to poetry became so absorbing that it made me silent, absent, and unsocial. I cared for nothing but to be alone, to hold converse with nature, and drink and express in verse the strange new thoughts that filled my mind. When we left Valsec and came to live at La Pinede, I beheld the sea for the first time. You cannot understand, Rose, you who have always lived on this coast; the emotion I felt at the sight of that boundless expanse of deep blue, and the sparkling silvered waves breaking on the soft sand, or dashing against the rocks, they seemed to me as if they were singing hymns of joy and praise, or sometimes whispering wailing complaints, and I longed to

give words to that wild music. Does this seem nonsense to you, Rose?"

"No, George. It is all very new to me but it gives me pleasure to listen to what you say. Oh, I understand now why you were seen sometimes at night and early in the morning walking up and down the seashore talking to yourself. People thought——"

"That I was out of my mind? I know they did. I sometimes used to see children and women too, running away as if they had seen a ghost; but I did not care about it, I was so engrossed with my own dreams. Oh, how it used to vex me when my father complained of the odious shingles on the beach, my mother of the wind and Jacques of the sameness of the sea view. It was as if people had attacked a dear friend of mine. I found it more and more difficult to converse with those who seemed to think everything I said more or less foolish. Even my dear mother, tender and kind as she always was, spoke to me and of me as if I had been a weak and fanciful child. She struggled to obtain for her wayward son full liberty to lead, on account of his health, the life he pleased, but which she supposed to be an utterly aimless one. They little knew how hard in one sense, I worked during those hours of solitude not as a student over his books, but as a gardener who must have for his helpers the spring showers, the summer sunshine. It was a strange, lonely existence, but not quite an unhappy one till——"

George stopped, and Rose pressed his hand and said in a low voice:

"Go on, let me hear what you felt, what you hoped, and what you suffered from the day you first saw Mademoiselle de la Pinede."

"Do you really wish me to open my heart to you entirely?"

"Every corner and recess of it," Rose answered.

Then he related to her the whole history of Denise's first visit to La Pinede, of the love at first sight which had taken possession of his heart, of his hopes against hope that it would meet with a return; of the days she had spent in his mother's sick room; of the admiration and reverence with which he had watched her life of heroic perfection, and the enthusiasm which had made his love of her a worship; the despair he had felt at her retirement from the world, and the consequent despondency which had rendered him indifferent and listless to everything regarding his future fate. Here he paused, and another pressure of Rose's hand made him again exclaim—

"Oh, I never understood how wrong it was to marry as I did; how hard it was upon you; how easily we might both have been wretched for life! No thanks to me, Rose, if we are, on the contrary, so much happier than I deserve!"

"No thanks to either of us, George. Thanks to God's great goodness to us. But tell me, when did you change? When did you begin to feel that you could care about me? I have told you, sir, how I surprised your secrets, how I read what you wrote; how I heard from Toinette and Benoit that you were good and clever, and then began——"

"To love me?" George said, in a low voice.

Rose did not repeat the words, but she hid her face with her hands and tears trickled down through her slender fingers, which he tenderly kissed away.

And then he told her of the promise he had made to Denise in a thoughtless hour and the use she made of it. He related to her the way in which she had stopped his departure, and pointed out to him the fault he had been on the point of committing. He said that even during the days of Belbousquet, he had been sometimes touched by Rose's patient endurance of his hateful conduct, which he now saw in its true light, but that he had hardened his heart by a sort of perverse obstinacy, and persisted in his rash resolution.

"But," he continued, "when she told me—you must forgive her for it, Rose—that you were beginning to love your unworthy and ungracious husband, I, too, began, my little darling, to see what a madman I was to run away from one whom God had given me for my own; and when I found you at La Pinede, where you had been a ministering angel to my poor old Vincent, when I saw you in that room where I had suffered so much;

when you opened those soft blue eyes of yours and looked at me with such inexpressible sweetness, I fell in love with you, dear Rose, and that is the end of my story." He paused, and then added, "the beginning of a new life."

Time passed away in those mutual outpourings, and it was long before George and Rose could think or speak of anything but their own history during the last few weeks; but before they left their resting-place—a spot neither of them ever forgot as the scene of their new-found happiness—George drew from his pocket the small parcel which Aloys de Belmont placed in his hands just as he was leaving the ship on the previous day. His cheeks flushed a little as he read a letter it contained, and then glanced at some newspapers enclosed in it; Rose watched him and wondered what it could be which seemed to cause him so much emotion. At last he said:

"Rose, I am so glad for you! I hope it is not pride that makes me rejoice at this news. Read this letter and these papers my darling, and thank God with me that I may perhaps be yet of some little use in the world, though not a deputy," he added with a smile.

They would have been a pretty study for a painter, those two young creatures, sitting on a mossy bank, the quivering light through the pine trees shining upon them through the green branches, and the expression of their faces as variable as those lights and shadows which changed with every breeze—his eager, pale face slightly flushed, his dark eyes kindling, and hers filling with tears as she read the papers he placed in her hands.

Oh, it was a glorious moment for the young couple, one of those unexpected pleasures that make the heart beat for joy. The letter was addressed to Aloys de Belmont. It was from a literary friend of his in Paris, who had transacted the publication of a volume of George de Vedelles' poetry. It had just appeared under an assumed name and its success had been instantaneous.

"Your friend's verses," he wrote, "are in every one's hands, and there is but one opinion as to the remarkable talent they evince. M. de Lamartine praises them, Delphine Gay has already recited the 'Ode to the Stormy Petrel;' people talk of nothing else. The 'Lays of Provence' have made quite a sensation. The general impression is that France possesses a new poet, and one whose inspirations are derived from the purest sources, a deeply religious spirit and an intense love of nature."

The reviews which accompanied this letter all praised the originality and beauty of George's poems. A few criticisms were mingled with the most gratifying encouragement.

This was, indeed, a filling up of their cup of happiness. Rose inserted the precious documents into her bag and would not part with it for a moment. She rode her donkey with a feeling of triumph which made her now and then break out into little incomprehensible exclamations. But when George said, "Would dear old Vincent could have known this," then her poor little heart, so full of various emotions, overflowed, and she burst into tears. If for many a year George had silently suffered from the absence of sympathy, it was amply made up to him that day.

CHAPTER XXII.

ALL IS WELL THAT ENDS WELL.

Now we must shift the scene, retrace our steps, and relate what had happened during the last two days to other personages of our story, and what had been in particular Madame Lescalle's state of mind and course of action since she had received a visit from Thereson on the afternoon after M^{se} Mede and Rose had left Belbousquet for Marseilles.

Her husband had been devoting himself to the business of Jacques de Vedelles' election, and his efforts were crowned with success. Thanks to his unremitting exertions, and the popular manners and gift of speaking which his candidate possessed, the

young Count had been returned by a fair majority. The news of his election reached M. and Madame de Vedelles in Paris, and made them resolve to return at once to La Pinede, where Jacques wished to invite some of his constituents, and entertain the neighbors.

It was a different kind of life opening before the new Deputy's parents. M. de Vedelles was enchanted and in high good humor, Madame de Vedelles pleased but preoccupied and anxious about her younger son, whose short and uncommunicative letters left her in complete doubt as to his feelings about his wife, and his prospects of happiness in domestic life. She longed to judge of this by her own eyes, and had been in consequence glad to leave Paris, and travel southward. It was settled that they should sleep one night at Draguignan to meet Jacques and M. Toussaint Lescalle, and on the following day return together to La Pinede.

This plan was so far carried out that they did arrive at the quaint old-fashioned hotel of that provincial town on the appointed day, and had a pleasant meeting with their son, who was radiant with delight at his new honors, and looking the picture of happiness. There was also a broad grin on M. Lescalle's face, and the reciprocal cordiality between the members of this family party as they sat down to dinner left nothing to desire.

It was a lovely evening, the same evening on which George de Vedelles had stood on the deck of the *Jean Bart*, on the point of sailing away from France, and on which Rose had knelt by the side of the dying old servant at La Pinede, as the setting sun poured into the room its last bright beams. Acacia and catalpa trees shaded the window of the inn where the de Vedelles and M. Lescalle were enjoying a good dinner, and the reminiscences of the electoral struggle, so happily successful. Under the shade of those lovely trees they sipped their coffee, and continued this interesting conversation. They would all most likely have slept very well that night, and dreamed of balloting urns and huzzas, and speeches on the hustings and in the Chamber, if, just as they were wishing each other good-night, and going to their respective rooms, a messenger had not arrived post haste with two letters from Madame Lescalle, addressed one to her husband, and the other to the Comtesse de Vedelles.

"What can have happened?" M. Lescalle thought, and Madame de Vedelles said. Of course, as happens in such cases, in the twinkling of an eye, and whilst opening these missives, all sorts of terrible possibilities crossed their minds.

The contents relieved them from the fear of some absolutely fatal announcement, but left them agitated, perplexed and bewildered. What a dreadful specimen of the art of tormenting it is to leave people in suspense as to some communication, the nature of which they cannot guess at, and about which imagination is allowed full play! Madame Lescalle's letters proved a wonderful instance of this kind of infliction. The one to her husband was as follows:

Mon Ami—Finding from your last letter that you were to dine and sleep at Draguignan to-day, to meet the Count and Countess de Vedelles and their eldest son, I think it my duty to inform you that it is of the most urgent importance that they and you and your sister, whom I have also written to, should meet me to-morrow at Belbousquet, to confer on a subject of the deepest gravity, upon which it is necessary that some decision should be at once arrived at.

Your daughter's happiness is at stake, and so is the honor of our family. An immediate separation between her and her despicable husband must be legally arranged. We are not going to be trodden under foot by these aristocrats, and our child despised and insulted. I have not been so explicit in my letter to the Countess.—("Explicit, indeed!" M. Lescalle muttered between his teeth, as he glanced down the page, and saw that it ended only with these words.)—I have contented myself with telling her that it is absolutely necessary I should see her and the Count, and that from ten o'clock in the morning I shall be awaiting them and you at Belbousquet.

The Countess had changed color whilst reading Madame Lescalle's short note to her. She handed it to her husband, and then said in a quiet manner, though with a trembling voice, to M. Lescalle: "Can you throw any light on this summons? I see you have also received a letter from your wife."

M Lescalle resolved in his own mind to make light of the matter until more was known on the subject, so with a shrug he said "My idea is that Madame Lescalle has planned a little practical joke in order to have the pleasure of assembling us all at Belbousquet, which she has been dying to show to Madame la Comtesse."

Madame de Vedelles' face showed how little she could accept that supposition. The old Count's brow darkened, and he sat with a curled lip and an expression of deep displeasure, which made Jacques go up to him and say, after reading Madame Lescalle's note:

"I have no doubt as to what has happened. The young people have had some little dispute. Madame Lescalle, naturally enough, has taken her daughter's part and a tragical view of the matter. Mothers fire up easily on such matters, don't they, madame?" he said, going up to his mother, and putting his arm round her waist. "Now, I really think the best thing will be to accept Madame Lescalle's rendezvous, and post off as fast as we can to-morrow to meet her and our young couple. Is not that your opinion, M. Lescalle?"

"Indeed, I quite agree with you, M. Jacques. My wife, incomparable as a wife and mother, has one only defect, and that is to fly into a passion on trifling occasions. She goes off like a rocket, and out again just as fast. I need not say," added the little man, drawing himself up, "that if M. George de Vedelles has insulted or ill-treated my daughter——"

"If such were the case," the Count interrupted, "which I cannot and will not believe, you could not be more indignant or more ready to take her part than myself."

Drawing Jacques aside, he added in a low voice, "Would to God I felt sure that such had not been the case. One can never foresee what that wretched boy may take it into his head to do."

"I am not a bit alarmed," Jacques answered in the same tone. "It is a child's quarrel, if quarrel there has been; and perhaps, after all, as Lescalle said, it may be only a bad joke."

Then he soothed his mother, and persuaded her to go to bed, and arranged with M. Lescalle that a *caleche* and post horses should be at the door at an early hour in the morning, that they would go straight to Belbousquet, and thence late in the evening to La Pinede. Then he smoked his cigar under the trees, and said to himself:

"If these foolish children should have quarreled, and a feud arise in consequence between the de Vedelles and the Lescalles, what a marvellous piece of luck it is that my election is an *accomplished fact*."

To return to Madame Lescalle. On that eventful day, when she had sent by a special messenger—a most unwonted piece of extravagance, justified in her opinion by the necessity of speedy action—the two letters which were doomed to disturb the night's repose of the travelers at Draguignan, she had undergone a great revolution of mind.

Thereson, freed by her young mistress' absence from the domestic duties at Belbousquet, had locked up the pavilion, and walked to La Ciotat. There, at last, in the store-room, where she found Madame Lescalle, she had been able to relieve her heart by giving a free scope to her tongue. We need not repeat all she said to that lady. It can be easily guessed in what high colors she painted all she had heard and overheard during the last weeks, and how her hatred of George de Vedelles made her describe his conduct not only as it must naturally have appeared to her, odious, but positively brutal. If he was not mad, she declared he must be wicked, and if he was not wicked, he must be mad. In any case, she could not keep silence any longer, and now that he had abandoned his wife——

"Abandoned Rose! What do you mean?" Madame Lescalle exclaimed.

"Did not Mise Rose inform madame that M. le Baron left Belbousquet last week, and that she has been there alone ever since, that is to say, she was alone till last Saturday, when Mise Mede came to stay with her."

"Good heavens! and why was I not told of this? I shall go

at once, and inquire into the matter. Get me my shawl and bonnet, order the donkey-cart."

"Madame must take the keys with her then. I brought them with me. Mise Mede and Mise Rose went out at daybreak on Dominique's mules. They said they should perhaps be absent a day or two."

"My goodness! what does all this mean? Everybody is gone mad, I think, Aunt Mede among the rest. Those *devotes* are all more or less insane. What is M. Lescalle about, I wonder! Since he has taken up the de Vedelles, I have had neither help nor comfort from him—nothing but running up and down the country to get that proud, impudent fellow Jacques elected—a Legitimist too—a pretty sort of candidate for my husband to put forward. Here is his letter; instead of coming home to-night, as was expected, he stops at Draguignan to meet the old Count and Countess on their way back from Paris. I must write to them all. Something must be done. Rose is as good as unmarried now. Still she will always be the Baronne de Vedelles. I wonder what has become of that *fada*."

Here the thought crossed her mind that George's disappearance was perhaps a good riddance. Then other thoughts followed. Her daughter, if legally separated from her husband, would have a right to her marriage settlement. Thereson had ventured to confess to her mistress that the evening before her departure she overheard the Baron saying to his wife (she did not mention that she had listened through the keyhole), "I shall leave you in possession of my fortune."

This was a very interesting sentence, and the whole situation of affairs began to assume a new aspect in Madame Lescalle's mind. There was much that rather smiled to her in the future that her active imagination was beginning to sketch out. The Baronne George de Vedelles, with a good income, the cashmires and diamonds of her Corbeille, perhaps a carriage and a servant with a livery, living in her father's house, and going into the world of La Ciotat, and perhaps of Marseilles with her mother, whose protection would be necessary to her, formed rather an agreeable vision in that mother's eyes. What at first looked like a great misfortune, was assuming another aspect. Rose used to say she did not want to marry, that she wished to live at home with her parents.

"Dear me," thought Madame Lescalle, "this will be just what she desires, only with a title and an income in addition, which will make her one of the first ladies in the town."

It was wonderful how quickly this idea grew and expanded, and embellished by being dwelt upon, to such a degree indeed, that in the course of a few hours Madame Lescalle had arrived at thinking nothing more desirable could have happened than George's disappearance, and her greatest fear now was that he might return before steps were taken for the legal separation, which she was now bent on bringing about.

Thus inspired, she wrote her letters to her husband and the Countess, and took care to make them as vague as possible, and couched in language which would ensure compliance with her summons. When once she had confronted the Vedelles, with her husband by her side, whether with Rose's consent, if she found her returned to Belbousquet, or presuming it if she was still absent, no stone would she leave unturned to clench the matter, and bring it to an issue.

There was something essentially combative in Madame Lescalle's nature. She liked strife and agitation as much as some people appreciate calm and repose. All the year round she was striving to get up struggles with her husband, her aunt, and her servants. Life was dull to her without some one to dispute with. As to M. Lescalle, he was too absolute in some respects, and too yielding in others, to afford much excitement of this sort; Mise Mede never quarreled with any one. The servants were her chief resource, but it is not exciting to dispute with persons obliged to submit to one. The prospect, therefore, of an encounter in which she felt hers would be the part of an injured mother, standing up for her child, gave her quite a genuine relief, and she prepared for the combat with considerable zest.

She and Thereson went to Belbousquet that day, and she felt

that by establishing herself there she would be mistress of the situation. In case M. Lescalle should not at once take her part, or should hint at the possibility of a reconciliation between George and Rose, she prepared some magnificent appeals to the feelings of a father, some vehement protests against again exposing her child to the brutal neglect of her unworthy husband, and a declaration that though noble blood might not flow in their veins, honor was as dear to them as to any aristocrat in France, and she, for one, would never be trodden under foot by the great ones of the earth. It was all very fine. She paced up and down the veranda, spouting these sentences, and they sounded well in her own ears.

She was not aware that two dark, wild-looking eyes were staring at her through the foliage. They were Benoîte's, who kept watching the red-faced, plump, excited little woman, as she would have done an angry turkey-cock. People were to her like curious animals, and she hoped that if Monsieur came back, he would see Mise gesticulate, and stump up and down, talking as fast as the rooks up in the evergreen oaks. But she instinctively kept out of her way, and this was prudent, for Thereson had not prepossessed Madame Lescalle in her favor.

Early in the morning this lady was seated in the little drawing-room in an expectant attitude. She had studied her dress, prepared her attitudes, and again rehearsed her speeches. The chief difficulty was to know whether to treat the de Vedelles, when they arrived, as friends or foes. If they did comply with her summons, especially if they and her husband arrived together, it would not be possible to receive them as enemies.

After a long and weary lapse of time, at last, late in the afternoon, the sound of a carriage in the lane was heard, and the party from Dragnignan came in sight. The Comtesse de Vedelles' anxiety had gone on increasing all the way, and when on arriving she saw neither George nor Rose, but only Madame Lescalle, who was looking grave and consequential, her heart sank within her.

"Where are our children?" she asked, with emotion.

"Ah, where are they, indeed! Madame la Comtesse," was the answer. "My daughter is with her aunt, Mademoiselle Lescalle; as to your son, God only knows where he is."

"Good heavens! what has happened?" Not only did Madame de Vedelles ejaculate these words, but the Count and Jacques made similar exclamations, and M. Lescalle said—

"Good God, madame! what has become of him?"

"Be seated," Madame Lescalle answered in a solemn manner; "there is no reason to suppose that anything has happened to M. le Baron de Vedelles; his disappearance is in keeping with the whole of his conduct since his marriage. He has shown his wife nothing but hatred and aversion; he has treated her with the most studied and insulting neglect, scarcely vouchsafing to speak to her. The faithful and devoted servant who followed my daughter to this solitude can bear witness to his savage, rude, brutal conduct—"

At these words Madame de Vedelles burst into tears: the faces of the two fathers expressed different, but strong, sentiments of indignation. M. de Vedelles said—

"I cannot condemn my son without a hearing. If he has acted as you describe, madame, I will disown and disinherit him. But, for God's sake, is there no clue to his movements? Does no one know where he is?"

"Why did not Rose let you know at once that he had left her?" M. Lescalle asked. "Did my sister know of his departure?"

"All I can tell you is that your sister carried off Rose with her yesterday morning. I have neither seen nor heard from them for some days."

There was a pause. Poor Madame de Vedelles seemed stunned. She thought George so incapable of taking care of himself that it made her tremble to think of him alone and amongst strangers. She turned and looked out of the window with a mournful, wistful expression; remorse and grief were brimming up in her heart and filling it with bitterness. The old Count had no remorse, but kept saying to himself that this son of his, once the joy and

pride of his heart, had become a source of endless misery. He felt exasperated against Madame Lescalle, whose every word wounded him to the quick, and yet he was too just and too much afraid that there might be grounds for her resentment, to give way to his own.

M. Lescalle had listened to his wife's denunciations with anxiety, and felt at a loss what to say or what part to take on the subject. The silence lasted for a few minutes, and then Madame Lescalle, gathering up all her energy, again recapitulated her charges against George, and, raising her voice, said that under no circumstances and in no case—she solemnly declared it in the presence of M. Lescalle, who, if he had any sense, honor, or right feeling, would support her, and in that of the Comte and Comtesse de Vedelles whose rank and position in no way abashed her—she should not consent to her daughter remaining with a husband who spurned and despised her. She should take her back to her paternal home, not an aristocratic one, indeed, but where, under her mother's protection, she would be shielded from insult and ill-usage.

M. Lescalle ventured to interrupt his wife's flow of language by observing that Rose would have to be consulted on the subject. This remark roused all Madame Lescalle's ire, and she burst forth again into a fresh torrent of accusations against George, which made the Countess look every moment more miserable, the Count more exasperated, M. Lescalle more distressed.

The only person in the room who did not seem at all agitated was Jacques. He listened to this flow of words with great composure. It was in his nature to take a very sanguine view of things, and he sat near the window pulling the ears of his dog, which had followed him into the room, with the resigned look of a person waiting for the cessation of a troublesome noise. In the midst of one of Madame Lescalle's most startling bursts of eloquence he stood up and said—

"Dear me! there they are in the garden, George and Rose, walking arm-in-arm."

Every one rushed to the window. Rose had just got off her donkey, and was looking at her husband with such an unmistakable expression of affection and happiness that Madame de Vedelles, eyes filled with tears of joy, and Madame Lescalle felt as if a glass of water had been suddenly dashed into her face.

George and Rose crossed the *parterre*, came into the house, and started with surprise when, on opening the drawing-room door, they saw the family party assembled there. No one knew exactly what to say or do, so great was the revulsion of feeling on every side. Madame de Vedelles and Madame Lescalle seemed, for different reasons, ready to faint. Jacques alone was self-possessed. He went up smilingly to George, and said—

"Congratulate me on my election, George. I suppose the news had not reached you in this desert?"

"Oh!" exclaimed George, "I would dear old Vincent had heard it; he would have been so glad."

"Vincent!" the Count and Countess exclaimed at the same time.

"We heard he was ill," Madame de Vedelles said; "but, oh, is he dead, our dear, faithful old friend?"

The Count walked to one of the windows and turned away to hide his emotion, whilst his wife shed tears she did not try to disguise.

"George" she said, "were you with him—did you comfort him for our absence?"

"No, mother," he answered, taking her hands between his own. "I arrived too late, but my dear little wife was with him during his last hours. M. le Cure told me that she had soothed and consoled and cheered him. He gave her messages for us all. Come, Rose, and tell my mother all about it."

Madame de Vedelles opened her arms and clasped her young daughter-in-law to her breast, with feelings too strong for utterance. Not to Vincent alone did she feel that this fair, gentle girl had proved a ministering angel. George was not the same morose, dejected being he had been for the last four years. She saw it in his eyes, she perceived it in the tone of his voice, and when, kneeling by her, he pressed his lips on the clasped hands

of his mother and his wife, she could only look up to heaven in silent, ardent thankfulness.

Madame Lescalle had gazed in silence on this scene. She was fairly bewildered at a change which, to do her justice, did take her by surprise; but there was no mistaking her daughter's countenance and manner; it was impossible to make her out as a victim, and the good side of her own heart asserted itself—she was glad Rose was happy. She said to herself—not quoting Shakespeare, but her wits jumping with those of our great dramatist—"All's well that ends well," and looking at her husband, ejaculated—

"Well, but what does it all mean?"

The notary rubbed his hands and twinkled his eyes and smiled, as if to convey the idea that he had known all along there was nothing the matter.

Meanwhile Jacques had been opening a newspaper he had brought from Marseilles, and glancing over its columns he suddenly made an exclamation.

"Any important news?" his father asked.

"Important domestic news," Jacques answered, "if this paragraph is not a hoax.

"A hoax? What do you mean?"

They all gathered round him, and Jacques read as follows—

The secret regarding the authorship of the volume of poems which made so great a sensation during the last few days at Paris, has transpired. It is now said in literary circles that the young poet whose first efforts have been so eminently successful, and to whom it is anticipated that the Prix Monthyon will be awarded this year, is the Baron George de Vedelles, son of the Count of that name, well known as a distinguished member of the magistracy in the west of France. This young man is only twenty-one years of age, and bids fair to rival some of our most eminent modern poets.

"Good heavens!" Madame Lescalle exclaimed, "you don't mean to say that you have written a book?"

Rose burst out into a joyous laugh, and clapped her little hands together.

"Is this true, George?" the Count inquired, laying his hand on his son's shoulder.

He was answered by a smile and a flush of pleasure on George's pale cheek. Jacques threw up something, the newspaper, or his hat, in the air. The notary embraced the Count, who felt so happy that he did not resent it.

"Oh, if Aunt Mede was only here!" Rose cried out; and it seemed as if that day all her wishes were to be granted, for almost as soon as she had uttered the words, Mdlle. Lescalle appeared. She had received her sister-in-law's summons, but not till late in the day. Madame Lescalle had not felt anxious that Mise Mede should join the family council, and had purposely sent her note so as not to reach her quite in time. Now her arrival was a welcome event. She had much to hear, much to see, much to guess at, and much to thank God for, that dear Mise Mede, and it was well she was there to suggest that they had all better depart, and leave the young couple to themselves and to the peaceful enjoyment of their new-found happiness.

As she opened the door leading out of the drawing-room, Benoit was discovered behind it. The little goat-herd had an

inveterate habit of eavesdropping, but no one thought at that moment of reproving her. She darted up to Rose and said—

"Mise, is Monsieur what he always said I was, a poet?"

Upon which Rose—they were all a little beside themselves just then—hugged her and said—

"Yes, he is, and I shall read you some of his verses."

* * * * *

On a lovely morning in May, two years afterwards, M. and Madame George de Vedelles were sitting on the grass of the little lawn at Belbousquet, and their beautiful boy of fifteen months rolling near them amongst the daises. George kept catching at his son's little fat legs, which made him shout with laughter, whilst Wasp, rather jealous of the baby, uttered short barks to attract his master's attention.

On a rustic arm-chair, close to this group, Mise Mede sat knitting stockings for her poor people. Rose had on her knees a newspaper, and divided her attention between it and the frolics of George and her boy. Suddenly she uttered an exclamation which made her husband turn towards her his handsome head, into the dark locks of which his baby had been sticking daises and blades of grass.

"Read that," Rose said, with tears in her eyes. He took the paper and perused, with visible emotion, the paragraph which his wife had pointed out to him.

It was a description of the fearful ravages of the yellow fever in South America, and the announcement of the death of several Sisters of Charity in the hospitals, where day and night they had been nursing the sick. "Amongst others," it went on to say, "we regret to state that Sœur Denise, so well known at Marseilles as the friend of the poor, and who, in the world, was so much admired as Mademoiselle de la Pinede, has fallen a victim to the raging pestilence. R. I. P."

"What different paths there are to heaven!" George ejaculated with a sigh. "Hers has been a short and glorious one. To her we owe it, Rose, that, thank God, we aim at the same end, though by a different road."

"Is not our road too smooth, too bright, too happy?" she said, drawing close to him and laying her hand on his shoulder.

"My own darling," he answered, "it is indeed beautiful and smiling now. But when we love anything on earth as I love you and that baby, the thought will sometimes arise that grief *must* come *some* day to you or to me. One of us, Rose, will have to go first, and leave the other behind. Heaven cannot be reached, without previous anguish, by those who love each other as we do. *She* went straight, an end to the goal, nothing weighing her down or keeping her back. We must not weep for her."

There was a moment's silence. Then the baby tottered up to them with a ball in its little hand and threw it to Wasp, who played with it and with the boy in a wild, frolicsome style. The parents smiled, and soon had to play too, whilst Mise Mede looked with rapture on the scene.

"Oh, my dear children," she exclaimed, "happiness is a beautiful thing to see!"

George kissed her wrinkled brow, and said—

"Dear old aunt, it is a blessed thing to be able to enjoy the happiness of others."

WRECKED AND SAVED.

PART I.

CHAPTER I.

PETER SANDS stood, as to relations, alone in the world; but he had had many friends raised up for him.

He had been saved from a wreck.

On the southwest coast of England he had been washed on shore in a storm, tied by a silk handkerchief to a hen-coop; and besides this child, who, apparently, was about two years old, only two sailors were saved. They, on recovering their strength, were questioned about the boy. They could not give any account of him. They belonged to a Portuguese vessel laden with fruit. Passengers had been on board who were believed to be friends of their captain. One of the sailors said he had seen a child in some one's arms; they had had plenty of work to do, and no time for observation. So the child, whose young flesh was bruised, and whose life was at first despaired of, remained unowned.

He had been thrown on the beach of a sea-coast which bounded a property, on which there was a prosperous village, skirting the sea, and running up a sheltered valley to the mansion of the proprietor, who was Colonel Penwarne. The mansion stood high above the village, on a fine lawn surrounded by magnificent trees.

A man who was a gardener, and who will be called James Gardener in this story, found the boy. He declared his desire to adopt him; he was a widower who had one child of his own, a girl called Mary, twelve years old. But Colonel Penwarne had himself determined to bring up this boy, and bring him up in the Catholic faith. James Gardener was of no religion. A clever man, but one who, having no faith, still was said to lead a moral life and give no bad example. His wife had been a Catholic, and his daughter, Mary Gardener, was of her mother's faith. James had a widowed sister to live with him called Mrs. Mills. Mrs. Mills took in washing, and she was bringing up her niece to the same work. They were glad to have the care of the shipwrecked child, and Colonel Penwarne paid for his maintenance.

The boy grew up, and showed a decided taste for machinery. There were mines not far off, and on any holiday Peter was sure to be where the great water-wheels were going round, and the stamping-mills were at work. He was a good boy, sweet-tempered and docile. He grew up well-looking, with large, soft, dark eyes. He was fond of learning, and his friends encouraged him to work with his slate and copy-book; and they always made him speak plainly, and observe good manners.

Colonel Penwarne took constant care of Peter. The boy had been conditionally baptized by Father Joseph, the priest who lived in the village, and he had then received the name of Peter Sands. As he grew up, there was something about him which every one remarked. It was a visible superiority in mind and manner. Colonel Penwarne never passed him without stopping, and frequently inquired about his learning. He would sometimes stop his horse when the boy touched his hat, and put him through a sort of catechism.

"Now, Peter, you may put your hat on. Tell me, if you please, how old you are?"

Peter, who loved the Colonel, and knew him well enough to reply quite boldly, would answer:

"I don't know, sir."

Then the Colonel would laugh, and hold up his riding-whip

in a threatening way; but Peter could only smile, for he knew it was done in joke.

"If you don't *know*, do you think you could *guess*?"

"Yes, sir. I guess I am fourteen years old; for it is over twelve years since Mr. Gardener took me off the rocks, and they then supposed I might be two years old."

"Ah, that was sad, very sad, my boy!"

So said Colonel Penwarne one well-remembered day.

"Very sad, my boy. But Almighty God gave you your life, and so remember to make a good use of it. Never let it be said of you, Peter, that it would have been better for you to have died upon the rocks, beat by the waves of the sea even to death. Now, Peter,"—then this lad of fourteen looked up into the Colonel's face—"now Peter, remember this: we ought every one of us to die rather than commit a mortal sin; and we are, as Catholics, bound never to follow in those foolish ways which end in sin. We are all bound to this obedience. But I consider you as doubly bound. Why was your life given to you when you were born of the poor mother you know nothing about? Why were you born. I ask?"

"To love God, and to serve Him in this world, and to be happy with Him forever in the next."

So Peter answered in the words of his catechism.

"Yes," Colonel Penwarne said on that memorable day; "yes. And if you had died in your innocence, a poor baby, on the rocks, what would have been your state?"

"Believing that I had been baptized, I say that I should have been at this moment among the saints in heaven."

"Right, Peter. And do you think that God gave you life and not death for a good or a bad purpose?"

"O Colonel, how could a bad purpose belong to the intentions of God?"

"Again right, quite right, Peter. But to what good end were you reserved?"

"To win, by a good life, the reward of a good soldier of the Cross," said Peter, remembering that he was speaking to one of the bravest soldiers who had ever served his country. "To do good, and to be good."

"Very well. You are instructed. And where will you get the strength to *be* and *do* as you say?"

"All the children of Holy Church find safety in the Church, knowledge in her teaching, and strength in the Sacraments."

"And whose name do you bear?"

"Your own name, Colonel Penwarne; and it is the name of the first of the Apostles. The Holy Father the Pope is also known as Peter in the Church, as being in Peter's place, and acting with his power."

"And who gave him that power?"

"God Himself."

"And who gave us the Church?"

"Our Lord Jesus Christ, the great Head of the Church, true God and true Man, to keep us all together as one family, and to teach us all truth."

"And how many Sacraments have you received?"

"Four," said Peter; "Baptism, Penance, Holy Eucharist, and Confirmation."

"And who give these Sacraments?"

"Priests; and Confirmation is given by a bishop; and baptism can be given by a lay person if a priest can't be had. And priests are made by bishops, who govern the Church; and our bishops have come down straight from the Apostles, and the Apostles were made by God the Holy Ghost, who came down on them visibly on the day of Pentecost: and the Pope is the successor of St. Peter."

The boy had got very animated by this time, and Colonel

Penwarne was smiling.

"And how many Sacraments have I had?" asked the Colonel.

"Baptism, Penance, Holy Eucharist, Confirmation, and Matrimony," said Peter, as fast as he could speak; and the Colonel smiled again.

"And what Sacrament is that which I shall never have?"

"Orders," said Peter.

"Tell me something about 'Orders.'"

"By that Sacrament priests are made."

"And what can priests do which I can't do?"

"They say Mass and give absolution."

"And what is Mass?" asked Colonel Penwarne.

It seemed to Peter at that moment as a very solemn question. He had often been asked this question in the catechism, and answered it very often also. He had answered it with a heart full of holy fear, and with knowledge and thankfulness, in many places, many times—at home, at school, and in church; but now, as he stood under the spreading bough of the summer sky, at the top of the rocky lane leading down to the village, and on to the sea—now, as he gazed up at Colonel Penwarne's face as he sat his horse so well, and looked so grand and yet so kind—now, Peter felt that the great truth he was to utter would never come more solemnly from his lips than at that moment.

He said, "The Mass is the unbloody sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Christ."

Colonel Penwarne took his hat from his head, and Peter uncovered his head also. "Tell me more," said the Colonel; and Peter went on readily.

"The Blessed Eucharist is the true Body and Blood of Christ, under the appearances of bread and wine. The change is made when the words of consecration ordained by Jesus Christ are pronounced by the priest in the Mass. Thus our Lord gives Himself to us in this Sacrament."

"And when were you last present at this?"

"This very morning, Colonel, when you and Mrs. Penwarne were at Holy Communion together, when I served Mass, and said the *Confiteor* for our Communion."

"Peter," said this brave good soldier, with a sweet smile, and putting his hat on his head, "take this." He dropped a rosary, with a silver crucifix attached to it, into Peter's hand, "Think of us some time when you say *us*. Pray for *us* now, and at the hour of our death. Keep holy. Lead an industrious, prudent life. Do good to souls when you can, for the love of our Lord. Do a little labor for His dear sake. Now, how do you get on with Mr. Breward?"

"Pretty well, I hope."

"He has just been speaking well of you. He says you have a wise head for your age, and a skilled hand. He will get you on, Peter, if he can. Good-day—good-bye."

And Colonel Penwarne rode on.

But he did not move twenty yards from the spot where Peter stood watching him. The horse fell as if shot, and lay for a moment like a dead thing. He rose, but Peter was by Colonel Penwarne's side as he lay with his head against a heap of stones. The horse rushed violently to the foot of the hill. People in the nearest cottage heard the sound of the runaway creature, and came in alarm and astonishment to see what was happening. Some seized the horse; others ran up the hilly road. They saw Peter, who had pulled off his jacket to roll up for a pillow and place under Colonel Penwarne's head, and when Peter saw them he beckoned anxiously for them to come yet more speedily.

When the first got to him—he was a sailor called Roper—Peter said,

"He has spoken twice. He said, '*The priest*,' and then '*Home*.' I'll run now. O Roper!" And then Peter burst into an agony of tears.

"Ah, yes; you've lost your best friend. Here, stay here; I'll run for Father Joseph."

"No," said Peter; "others are coming. Some, I hope, have gone for the doctor. I'll go; I'll obey him all my life."

So he ran, going over the hedges and across the fields, till

he reached the priest's house, and found that he had gone three miles off, on a sick call.

But he and the priest's boy took blankets and a shutter; and as they fell in with some people to help them, they were as quickly as possible by the Colonel's side.

"He is dead!" said a gray-haired old man. "He has never spoken. He gave one stifling sort of sigh, and that was death."

By this time the doctor had arrived.

And then a sad procession was formed, and they went back up the hill into the wood, and among the flowers and shrubs that made the ornamental ground around Penwarne.

They stopped under the shadow of a group of chestnuts. The doctor had gone on and entered the house. Servants came out running towards them; and then once more the villagers went forward with the solemn burden of a good man's corpse.

CHAPTER II.

Peter followed the bearers of Colonel Penwarne's body up to his house. He had often been there before. But now there seemed to be an almost awful sadness about it.

Round the door and on each side of it there was a sorrowing assemblage of servants, and coming forth from the porch was seen an elderly lady, with quick, short, trembling steps, and by her side a girl, about twenty years of age, and as they met the body the bearers stopped, and they both dropped weeping on their knees.

Peter knew them. They were Mrs. Penwarne and her niece, Lady Edith May; for Mrs. Penwarne's sister having married Lord Greening and died, her only daughter, Lady Edith, was living at Penwarne during the time of her father's absence in the East Indies.

Peter did not wait to see any more. He went away noiselessly and got into the entrance-drive; then across the farmland, where the unconscious cattle were standing knee-deep in the great pool, round by the group of elms that cast a dark shadow on the quiet water, and on to a stile, on the other side of which was the public road. Peter sat on the top bar of the stile, and there, sheltered from the sun by the branches of a huge holly-tree, he gave way to his grief; covering his face with his hands, he sobbed and wept as if his heart were broken.

But he had not come to the stile without a motive. He knew that the priest would pass that way on his return to the village, and he waited to ask him to go straight to Penwarne.

Soon a man came up the road.

"Have you seen Father Joseph?" asked Peter.

"No. He went to Stonemoor this morning."

"I know that. I am waiting to see him pass. But I thought that, if he had passed already, you would have met him."

"True. But I have not met him. However, you may have to sit there half the day. What's the matter?"

"Mrs. Penwarne wants Father Joseph," said Peter. He could not bring his courage up to the point required to speak of Colonel Penwarne's death to a stranger.

Then the man went on his way; and when Peter saw that he was alone he jumped down from the stile, and on his knees began the prayers for the dead.

Father Joseph came soon after this, and to him Peter could speak, and tell all that had happened. He told it speedily, and Father Joseph listened.

"Can you take my pony home, Peter? I will go to Penwarne across the fields."

So Peter mounted the stout pony, and Father Joseph got over the stile and was quickly out of sight. He had hardly said a word to Peter, and yet his lips had been moving, and the boy had heard his voice.

And now Peter was alone again, going down the dusty road slowly, which was just what the tired pony seemed to like.

He got to the chapel-house safely, and took the good little beast to its stable. Finding no one there, he gave the pony its lay and water, loosened its girths, and began to do the groom's work, in which he had been instructed; for he was fond of horses; and the coachman at Penwarne used to teach him in leisure hours, telling him that he liked a man to be able to ride and drive, groom a horse, and handle harness, saddle and bridle as one who had a knowledge of most things.

Peter was one of those people who can learn and do learn.

He knew, what we ought all of us to know, that the seeds of knowledge grow to their perfection in the ground of humility. He had a teachable spirit; and he never thought that he knew everything when, in truth, he had only begun to learn something.

Peter was neither vain nor self-conceited; and, so far, he had succeeded very well in life. In fact he was just the boy who succeeds, for he was willing to learn and humble enough to listen; he was quick to understand and wise to remember; then, too, he was diligent in the practice of what he had learnt, and faithful to do well what he had undertaken to do.

He was clever, methodical, thoughtful, industrious and faithful. It may be said that it was his nature to persevere and to conquer. But there are many things which learners find in the path of perseverance which are by no means pleasant; and to conquer and overcome, and put a law on one's actions and a curb on one's tongue—never to give way to cowardice, never to turn aside with the discontented—all that was more than Peter's nature could have done without help, and that help he got by keeping God in all his thoughts; and the grace so to live in the presence of God he got by prayer, and by going to Mass and the Sacraments.

When people said, looking at Peter, "There goes a clever boy," they would have been near the real truth if they had said, "There goes one who is good."

This boy was in many things very different from other boys. Other boys had fathers and mothers—they were members of a family, whom they loved, and they were loved again. They had parents to honor and to obey; friends and relations to listen to and to respect. But Peter was alone. The waves of the sea had cast him on the sands of the shore. He had never seen a relation of any kind in all his life.

He had, however, a good, strong, loving heart, and he loved God. He thanked God for all the mercies that happened to him, and for all the friendship and kindness he had found in the world; for the mercy that had taken care of him in infancy, brought him up as a child, and kept and taught him.

He heartily loved those who had made a home for him. But he had not all been the gift of God?

A father and mother have duties towards their offspring, but the kind people who had cared for Peter had had no duties to fulfil towards him. Their heavenly Father had put it in their hearts to be kind to Peter, and they had fulfilled their hearts' desire. Peter was grateful to them, and he loved them. But when he thought of father, mother, and friends, he looked to the Church, and found father, mother and friends there.

All this was present in a wonderful way to Peter's mind as he groomed the priest's pony on that memorable day; for had not Colonel Penwarne been his best friend, and had he not left the earth and appeared before his God?

Peter prayed. What could he do but pray? Had not this friend paid for his maintenance, sent him to school, inquired as to his tastes and disposition, and put him in the way of making the most of such talents as had been given to him?

All this was true, and young and lonely as Peter was he felt that there had been about him the sunshine of prosperity. The question very naturally rose in his heart as he stood there at his work, "What will happen to me now?" But as soon as the question came the answer followed upon it. "The will of God." Yes; that had come, and would come, and whatever it was, he must be willing to accept it.

Then he remembered the rosary he had had given to him by his friend and benefactor, and he took it quickly from his pocket. He kissed the cross, and recollected those last words

that desired him to pray for his friends as well as for himself. "Pray for us," he sobbed forth, resting his hot forehead on the mane of the patiently standing pony. "Holy Mary, Mother of God pray for us;" for the friend who, since these words had been spoken, had gone forth from this earth to join the holy dead, and for himself, who had to stay and work out his salvation according to God's will.

These thoughts brought the use of prayer, and the certainty of death, and the great responsibility of life very close to Peter's mind. The truths which belonged to religion seemed to have suddenly got so full of life that all smaller things were lost in the contemplation of them.

What does it profit a man if he gain the world and lose his own soul?

He had said it often, and learnt it in his catechism; but what had happened now had made him know, and feel for a fact, that life is indeed given to us for the purpose of loving and serving God in this world, and living with Him forever in the next.

So Peter there and then made a strong resolution to live as a Christian ought to live, so that death could never take him unprepared. And he prayed a strong prayer, and a very sincere one that God would help him to keep his resolution, and that our Lady, like a mother, and St. Joseph, like a true friend and protector, would have a merciful care over him in life and death.

Just as he had got so far in his pious thoughts he was interrupted.

Some one came to the stable-door, and Peter heard a voice he knew very well say, "Ah, good lad; thank you. I was wondering who was here with the pony. Ah, I see. We have one more friend gone into eternity with a heart full of faith and prayer, and a life of good works. Now mind what I say—trouble seems to plough up the heart. And what good is this ploughing? I prepare the place it passes over for the growing of good seed. The seed springs fast. The dew of heaven and the gracious rain falls, and are quickly drunk up by the prepared soil; so will the seed spring in your heart all the quicker for this great grief. Mind—yes, mind this, Peter: that you bring the seed safely to the well-grown ear, and reap it sound for the great harvest, which is the judgment-day of God. A great deal of trouble we must take with our hearts," said this kind-voiced person; "we have got to do the daily care for ourselves, keeping our hearts clear from evil thoughts, and from the dangers of our forward wills, just as we should keep our grounds and gardens clear of weeds, and protected from evil accidents; and we never need be afraid of losing strength, for we know where to go for the Bread of life; and the cleansing fountain is open to us in the Church—the one Holy Catholic Church."

Then the person who thus spoke stepped forward to the boy's side, and put the key of the corn-bin into his hand.

"There, take out the right measure, and don't keep the good little beast waiting for his food. I see you have got the water; and then, if your duties allow of your helping me, I shall be glad of your services in the sacristy."

"I can come, Mrs. Beauchamp," said Peter. "No one will expect me to-day. Is there anybody with you?"

"No, I am quite by myself. I gave Millicent a holiday, and she went off to Tredington at five o'clock in the morning."

Mrs. Beauchamp was Father Joseph's sister. She was several years older, and she acted as his housekeeper. Millicent was her servant, a wise-hearted woman, who had lived with her fifteen years, ever since her thirteenth birthday. So Peter finished his stable-work and followed Mrs. Beauchamp into the priest's house.

CHAPTER III.

From the house Mrs. Beauchamp led the way into the sacristy; and there Peter saw that work had to be done in preparation for Benediction, the hour for which was four in the afternoon.

It was not the first time that Peter had helped in this work, and he now began to do his part without a word being said or a single direction given.

In the years that followed Peter often thought of that hour. It would come back to his mind like a picture, and his thoughts would rest upon it. For memory will often bring back a time which, when it was passing, we never tried to remember. Back it comes, often after many years, with many little particulars—the hour, the sunlight, the very shadows on the wall. And so this hour in the sacristy, on this solemn day of Colonel Penwarne's death, in after years came back to Peter with a comforting sense of a holy time—a time of solemn consideration of the last things and the last hours of life.

Mrs. Beauchamp never spoke; neither did Peter speak. He had not been brought up to be a selfish chatterer, fond of hearing his own voice; he seldom spoke to his elders or his superiors till he was spoken to; but he could talk very well for his years, and no boy living could give a more straightforward answer, or tell the truth, and the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, better than he could.

But now in the sacristy he worked on silently, knowing what Mrs. Beauchamp wanted, and doing for her all he could.

They draped the altar and placed the lights. The fine summer weather had covered the earth with flowers, and never had the chapel looked more bright or shown a more joyful aspect than on this memorable day. Peter seemed to see it all, as has been said, when memory reproduced this day in after years. The roses—some stiff and upright, and dark damask red; others white as driven snow; others, again, trailing their small-leaved branches, covered with the bright golden buds of the yellow brier, and some blushing a pale pink of the most delicate beauty. Before St. Joseph were white lilies, and geraniums blossomed at our Lady's feet.

Then, in the midst of all, a tall young figure, wrapped in a long gray cloak, the face hidden by a veil, walked quickly, with noiseless steps, up the centre alley of the little church, and Peter knew it was Lady Edith May.

She stopped by the bench which the family from the mansion always occupied, and she knelt down where Colonel Penwarne had been in the habit of kneeling. Then she dropped her face on her hands, and her whole figure shook with emotion.

She rose in a few minutes, and came on with the same rapid step to where Mrs. Beauchamp was standing. Then Mrs. Beauchamp pointed to the sacristy-door; and Peter went on before her, while she waited for Lady Edith. When Peter saw those two enter the room, he was going to leave it by the outer door; but Mrs. Beauchamp made a sign for him to stop.

"You may be wanted," she whispered.

Lady Edith turned quickly to Mrs. Beauchamp; and Peter saw such a sad face, it brought the tears into his own eyes to see hers. She laid her head on Mrs. Beauchamp's shoulder, and gasped forth these words, with choking sobs between:

"I came to say that I think—this afternoon—I can't play."

It was Lady Edith who always played the organ on Thursday afternoons: an organist from Treddington, a town six miles off, came every Sunday.

"Yes, I understand. We can do without you," answered Mrs. Beauchamp, in a soothing voice.

"I was afraid there might be a difficulty, because Miss Appleton is from home."

Miss Appleton sang very well, and was able to lead the choir without the help of music, and she always played the organ when Lady Edith was away.

"O, we can do," said Mrs. Beauchamp. "I'll see to it. We have many faithful hearts among our singers, and the soul that is faithful can always do what is expected of it."

This was not the first wise sentence that Peter had heard from this good woman's lips that day, and he never forgot it. When memory brought back the bright, flower-decked altar, and the sorrowing figure of Lady Edith May, there always came the words, as in a whisper, "A soul that is faithful can always do what is expected of it;" and he would treasure the thought up as a strong truth, to be a help to him in an hour of need.

Lady Edith went into the organ-loft, and Peter put the sacristy quite tidy. Mrs. Beauchamp, after this, sent him into the priest's house, remaining behind to speak to Lady Edith. When she entered the kitchen she found that Peter had been wiping knives and getting the dinner-tray ready, remembering that Millicent had been away ever since five o'clock in the morning, and that Mrs. Beauchamp had undertaken the arrangement of all household things. Father Joseph having gone from home, Mrs. Beauchamp had evidently not sent, as was usual on such occasions, for Mary Gardener to help her.

She smiled to see him so busy; but great tears were standing on her pale cheeks, and she could evidently hardly trust herself to speak.

They went on about household things without any words, till Mrs. Beauchamp asked if Mr. Breward was expecting Peter.

"No," said the boy, "he won't expect me, I am sure. Everybody at Treddington and Stonemoor knows about our trouble by this time; and Mr. Breward would make sure that I should stay."

"Yes; I suppose the news must be known everywhere. Did you stop at James Gardener's last night?"

"Yes. I came back to go to my duties. Mr. Breward knows."

"I'd keep you for a week if I could," said Mrs. Beauchamp.

"O, I should like it!" Peter stopped his work, clasped his hands, turned away to hide his face, and sobbed aloud. The thoughts of a few days of rest, of peace with his sorrowing heart, of being engaged in some labor for those he loved, came with such sad comforting sweetness, that he could not for a few minutes control himself.

"Mr. Breward would have no objection if he were not over-busy," said Mrs. Beauchamp quietly; "and you could go to Stonemoor after Mass to-morrow morning, and get his leave, and bring home a bundle of what you may want. Do so. I will tell Father Joseph. I am thinking that Mrs. Penwarne may like to see you; and if she did, I should be sorry not to have you on the spot to wait on her immediately. I will write a note to Mr. Breward. You can live here. I may be glad of a messenger, and there may be many things to do."

Every word this kind friend said seemed to have healing in it. Peter's heart thanked her. He felt very naturally that he had no spirit to go to work. To occupy his whole mind with the things doing at Stonemoor would be impossible without such a struggle as he seemed too young to make. What Mrs. Beauchamp had said was full of comfort to him.

"Ah," he thought, "in a week's time I could go to work again with a brave heart. What a mercy it will be to work about here for a few days! O how thankful I am!"

Mrs. Beauchamp, who had known Peter from the very first, who had held him when her brother had given him conditional baptism, and had never withdrawn her gentle supervision from him, knew as well what was passing in his mind as if he had found words to explain it to her. She had fixed her large, examining, gray eyes on his face for a moment, and read all that he felt.

"Let that be a settled thing," she said, in her quiet way; "and now, if you will lay the cloth in the dining-room, I think we shall have Father Joseph back directly, and I will put out your dinner at this end of the table, and just go away to make myself tidy."

So she followed Peter up-stairs, and made the dining-room look neat and pleasant, and then went down the passage to her own room.

Good Mrs. Beauchamp was thinking as much of the living as of the dead. She had kept this boy by her all the morning on purpose. She had not wished him to be talked to by gossiping people, who would have undoubtedly made many unpleasant observations. She knew the world well, and the world as represented in the village of Penwarne was a very talkative world.

One person would have torn the boy's heart by insisting on

hearing every particular, just for the sake of telling it all again; another would have condoled with him, and have said that he must remember he had lost his best friend—the friend who had paid for his maintenance, and given him his clothing, and got him his education—and it would have been said how he must look after himself now. And, of course, some would have wondered if Mr. Breward had ever been paid any premium with him, and have supposed that he would now find himself turned out upon the world. Mrs. Beauchamp wished to keep all such gossiping talk away from Peter's ears. She herself had many thoughts as to what the boy's future would be; but she believed—and she prayed that Peter might be taught to know—that whatever happened in regard to him would be *the will of God*, and, therefore, the *right* thing and the *best* thing; the thing to bring him to his perfection, and to unite him to our Lord.

"Whatever happens is right. It is our evil way of taking it that makes it wrong." This was one of the sayings that many remembered as having come from her lips; and certainly there was a power in what she said which her hearers felt and remembered.

All things considered, Mrs. Beauchamp was glad to keep Peter near her for the next few days, and as he was quite at home in the priest's house, she felt no difficulty as to what to do with him.

From infancy Peter had been at home in that holy house. Millicent had been three years in Mrs. Beauchamp's service at the time when, amidst the rain and wind, the beating of the waves, and the cries of dying men, that infant had reached the shores in safety. She had helped to teach him Catechism, made him say his hymns, encouraged him in useful learning, and made work a matter of play to him whenever he came to the house. At the school there were holidays on Saturday, and Peter had generally spent at least half that day at the priest's house, sometimes with Father Joseph in the garden, often with Mrs. Beauchamp in her room, and at all odd times with Millicent.

He was by nature a very handy child, and idleness was his aversion. James Gardener, with whom he lived, used to say he was a little vexed that he did not seem inclined to take to the gardening. "He likes flowers—ah, and fruit, too," with a laugh, "when they are come and ready for him, but he has no love of the labor that has to be given to their cultivation."

On which Mrs. Mills, his sister, who had from the first acted a mother's part by the boy, would say with a smile, but still with a touch of reproof in her voice, "Nay, James; but he never gives you any unwilling work, and does he not read those gardening books aloud all the evening long?"

"Why, yes; you are just proving the truth of my words. He likes to *know* about the science, as I may say, but he would rather handle a steam engine, or even a pump handle, than my spade. He would invent the way to throw the water over the top of a tree, but he would not find any entertainment in digging the soil round its roots."

"It's all according to nature," Mrs. Mills would reply, "but I always expect to see some good come to Peter."

"Well, Mary, have *you* not something to say?" James would ask of his daughter, who was not a person of many words.

"Say? What, about Peter? Why, then, Peter is Peter. No one ever expected him to be just exactly like other folks. I say to aunt often that he is the cleanest lad we wash for. He dearly loves his bath. The sea saved him, and I suppose he has loved it ever since. Roper, too, says 'he is very steady.'" Mary was engaged to be married to Roper, and Roper was the sailor who first came to Peter when he was kneeling by Colonel Penwarne's side.

Thus it will be seen that Peter Sands had many friends, though he had no relations, and that he deserved, as far as was possible, the good opinions that had been formed of him.

But on this day secretly every one wondered what would become of him now.

CHAPTER IV.

The priest came home in time for his dinner, which this day had been long waiting for him, his usual hour being half-past one.

"Sit down there, Peter; I shall make a hurried meal to-day. Sit down while I talk to you. I have been with Mrs. Penwarne, and I have had to go to Treddington. Mrs. Penwarne would like to see you, Peter."

"When?" he asked, with a gasp and quite under his breath.

"To-morrow. A priest who is staying at Treddington will be here to-night; he will say Mass in this church. I shall go to the mansion and say Mass in the chapel; I can take you. If Mrs. Penwarne is well enough I think she will be sure to see you. You must take the rosary Colonel Penwarne gave you, and try to tell her exactly, and in as few words as you can, all that passed—when you met him on the mill, I mean, immediately before his death."

"Will Mrs. Penwarne want to have the rosary?" asked the boy. "I should find it hard to part with it."

Father Joseph raised his eyes from his plate, and looked at Peter.

"O, I think I would give my life to console her," cried Peter, scarcely able to keep from loud weeping. "I don't mean that I should have an *unwilling* heart about it, only a sore heart. Things may be very disagreeable and against one's desires, and yet we may have a good consenting will. If you think, Father Joseph, that she wishes for the rosary, I give it to her in my heart now—there!" He laid it on the table. "I give it, if she likes it, and I hope her possession of it may not be made sad by a knowledge of what the trial of it is to me."

"I think," said the priest, "that Mrs. Penwarne will never desire to undo any act of her lost husband's life. I think she wants to see *you*. O, you have put your rosary in your pocket again, have you?"

"Please to go on and tell me why she wants to see me," said the boy, with a smile.

"Because to you his last words were spoken, and you can say what thoughts his last words expressed. Yours was the last face he looked on in life; you are the last witness to speak to the holiness of his heart, his love of God, and his loyalty to the Church. Peter, that man had won a great name for himself on earth, and he had nobly filled a great place; but such words as he said to you, such reverence as habitually dwelt in his heart, were his greatest riches and his highest honors. Peter Penwarne lies dead, and what is it that we all dwell upon for our consolation? Why, *this*, and *this only*—that he was a good Christian, a holy son of Holy Church."

Father Joseph rose up and said grace and a prayer for the dead.

"I think you will be wanted this evening in the organ-loft," he said; which Peter took for leave to go, and he therefore went quickly to Mrs. Beauchamp's room.

It was a pretty room, a part of the old house which had been added to for the church, and to give the priest a pleasant library. The western sun came through the white blinds, and made the wood panels which, instead of paper, covered the walls very bright and beautiful, and there sat Mrs. Beauchamp.

She rose up when Peter entered, unlocked a heavy door, and took a square box from the cupboard behind the panel.

"I'll follow you," she said; and so Peter carried the case which contained the monstrance into the sacristy.

Before half an hour had passed the little church became quite full.

That day it seemed as if everybody's heart longed for the house of God, there to pour forth grief and get healing. That day, hearts having been suddenly softened, sadly bruised, and some, perhaps, half broken, everybody had a prayer to say and a grace to ask for; and everybody could give thanks, because he who had been so suddenly taken away from them had lived a life of readiness to meet death.

This was the way in which sympathy for the bereaved Mrs. Penwarne was shown; the people flocked to church, and, after Benediction, to the confessional, to make ready for the offering of the next morning's Holy Communion, because the soul of the greatest of all them, from the depths of a great humility, asked their prayers.

This afternoon, when Lady Edith May knelt in her uncle's place, how many loved her!

When the hands of the Lord presses upon us, at His own good time, are we not a live, every one of us, to the truth of our being a member of one family, living in one faith, moved by one love, approaching by one way to one end, to that great day, the day of death, "the day for which all other days were made?"

One overpowering sensation of sympathy pervaded the whole place. "Pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death," was said as with one heart throughout the whole church; and the comfort of that human sympathy, the source of which is in the Sacred Heart of our Blessed Lord, was felt by Lady Edith as an inexpressible blessing, and she gave God thanks.

And so that day passed and the evening came, and Mary Gardener, that short-spoken, hard-working daughter of James Gardener, in whose house Peter had lived, put her head just inside the priest's door, and said:

"Isn't Peter coming to speak to aunt Mills before night? She'd take it kindly, and it's no more than decent, I should say." And then, before it was possible to get any answer, she turned away.

But Peter was just outside near a hawthorn-tree, through the branches of which the last rays of the setting sun were blazing, and he said:

"Let us go together."

And Mary, with her ungainly ways, smiled a shy sort of smile and walked on, her tall, gaunt figure towering above Peter's head, though he was a very tall youth for his age.

"There is only aunt and father at home," she said. "I'm going to have a walk with Roper, and then we take a bit of supper with his mother. He's off again to-morrow for a ten months' absence, he expects, and there is so much washing and ironing; he is obliged to have patience, and wait my time. Father says he hates so much slop about. But somebody must wash. And my mother died when I was but thirteen years old—that was the year that you came ashore—and he would not have wanted to work for aunt Mills and me too. And now I am twenty-six, and I don't believe I've cost him a sixpence since I could do a day's ironing. If aunt and I had not had a trade on our hands I wonder what we would have done, if he had died instead of the good colonel. We've been saying so to him to-day. He's very hard sometimes. He would dearly like to live like a king and keep us as two servants on no wages, and then where should we be?"

"Why, Mary," said Peter, "I never heard you say so many words together before in my life."

"Well," said Mary bluntly, "and you never may again,"

CHAPTER V.

James Gardener's cottage was a remarkably pleasant-looking place: a good brick cottage, with white chimneys and a slated roof, with a green-painted porch covered with roses and honeysuckle, and a glass-roofed orchard-house at one end, where, in large pots, grew dwarf peach-trees and plum-trees, apricots and nectarines.

A thatched tool-house stood near, over which the branches of a fine westeria hung from the limbs of an old apple-tree, round which it climbed, making it full of beauty with its drooping flowers. There was a large garden attached to this cottage, and rows of evergreens and great towering pear-trees made shade where the paths went, and sheltered sunny seats. There was a pond too, where gold and silver fish were bred,

and where the water-lilies lifted up their flowers like ivory cups among the floating leaves. The pond was large and edged with stone, and over this edge James Gardener dipped his watering-pots, and no greater delight had young Peter ever felt than the delight of helping to water the plants on a summer evening. Not that he cared so very much about the plants; it was the fun of dipping up the water that he enjoyed most. Here the boy had had a happy childhood, and here he still at times occupied his little bedroom; but many nights in a week he occupied a room at Stonemoor, in the place where the foreman of the stone and iron works lived; for the walk from Stonemoor to Penwarne was long and dreary, and Colonel Penwarne and Father Joseph had so arranged as to prevent his returning every night.

Peter, as he walked up to the garden-gate and said "Good-night" to Mary, who walked on, saw James smoking a pipe in the porch, and he received a smile and a nod from Mrs. Mills, who was busy at some work immediately opposite the window; but there was a seriousness about the woman's smile and a gravity on the face of the man, who slowly smoked his evening pipe, which belonged to the moment, and grew out of the event which had marked that day forever for all the inhabitants of Penwarne.

Peter gave his hand to James Gardener, but they neither of them spoke. It was Mrs. Mills' voice that uttered the words, "Come in, Peter. I want to see you." Then Peter walked into the house.

"O my dear boy," cried the motherly voice of that kind-hearted woman, "this is a bad day for you and all of us, but O, for you? I have thought of you all day. Don't let it bear you down too low. We have all something to suffer, and the troubles that fall on us when we are young we grow accustomed to."

"For me?" said Peter, at a loss to know for the moment how he was so distinguished. "Why for me so much more than for others."

He spoke quite naturally. He really did not quite understand Mrs. Mills.

"Now don't let the bad pride get over you," she said. "Don't you stand there a fine lad, brought up as carefully as any gentleman, and is there a living soul from whom you can take a bit of bread and not feel it is a charity? and you not able to get your own living yet, or earn as much as would pay for the good clothes you wear? James has been talking of it all day, and tired out both me and Mary. You know that a man may be a hard man, and yet good and kind in his way. He says we must look after another lodger, for your month will be up next week, and the colonel always paid by the month, and kept in advance."

"O!" said Peter, resting long on that little world, with a volume of deliberation in the tone of his voice.

"He—I mean the Colonel—notwithstanding your having lived so much at Stonemoor, has just to keep you a home here among your old friends, gone on with his payments. He has paid seven shillings a week for your board, three shillings a week for your room and your seat by the fire, and one shilling a week for your washing; and there has never been a quarter in which he has not given me half a sovereign for looking after you, which truly I would have done for no more than the pleasure and company you have ever been to me. O, you'll keep good, my dear lad; you'll avoid all evil ways, you'll live a good life! Peter, I pray you may never fall, now that you must begin upon a new road and take care of yourself."

To find himself quite the prominent person in the story of this sad day's events was felt to be a strange thing to Peter. He knew the truth of all Mrs. Mills had said; but he could not bring his mind to dwell on himself, nor his heart to trouble over himself just then.

"There is plenty of time before next week," he said.

"Very true, very true. And Mary and I would go away and take a house for ourselves, only she's going to marry Roper; and if we left James to get a housekeeper he'd marry her, I suppose; and we have fairly muddled our brains to-day to try

to get up some little plan to serve you, but we feel no wiser than when we beg n."

"Thank you," said Peter. "You will never be other than thoughtful for me, I know. But it is of no use to think of too many things at a time. I am going to Stonemoor to-morrow, and I shall get Mr. Breward's leave to spend a week at Father Joseph's. Mrs. Beauchamp says I can be useful, and before the week is over I shall know more than I know now. And just at present I'd rather be among old friends."

Peter's voice failed. He could not say a word more, and Mrs. Mills loved him all the better for his emotion. "I only wanted to prepare you for anything that James might say. He is sure to say something. He has worked himself up, and he is hard on some points; he always was—yes, very hard. Here he is."

And James Gardener at this moment sauntered into the room, holding his empty pipe. "Good evening," he said; "I have been having thoughts about you all day."

"Thank you," said Peter.

"Next Monday you begin life for yourself. You know that, I suppose?"

"Indeed I don't," said Peter.

"Well, I do," said James Gardener, in a voice that had some smothered anger in it; "I don't let my lodgings without security for the payment. I sold myself free to let my pretty bedroom next week, and I have a man in my eye who will do for the purpose. I can't afford to lose money. I have worked hard for what I have got, and a man naturally values worth and beauty which he has stored for himself, and arranged to his own taste and fancy. I don't suppose that, for its size, there is a prettier tenement than this in the whole country. I am proud of my place, and proud of myself for having made it what it is. I don't wish to be hard on you, Peter. You have grown up under this roof, and strengthened your limbs at play in that garden; you are young to be left to your own resources, and this place may be above you now. You must have learned to rough it one day, and as you have lost your patron you will have to begin at once. Don't be down-hearted; I will stand your friend all my life, and I am honest in saying so. It has been a sore struggle with me all day—and the women have been vexed with me—but I can't keep things wearing out my mind. I have other matters to dwell upon. I felt obliged to speak out, and so I sent Mary to bring you here. Perhaps she did not say that I sent her?"

"No; she did not say that," answered Peter.

"Well, that's no matter; she brought you, and there you are. There is nothing disagreeable between us, I hope?"

"Nothing at all," said Peter bravely. "All you say is true. It is more than I have had time to think of. It would have a lot come to me to-morrow, I am sure. Of course I know that I have the greatest possible loss in Colonel Penwarne's death." He felt surprised at himself that he was able to say those words quite calmly. "Of course I know that I have no chance now of many advantages that, had he lived, might have been mine. But I can't say that I feel cast down on that account. I shall be very sorry to leave this pretty place, for I have never had any other home—O, I shall be very sorry! I love it dearly!"

"Well, then, it's all square and straight. We, who have been always like father and son, can go on in our friendship; and I hope that, wherever you go, you will never pass us by, but look in upon us whenever you can, and right glad shall we be to see you. I suppose you will make some bargain with Mr. Breward, and stay at Stonemoor. But you will often be here on Sundays. Come in, and be at home here if you do. But, my lad, I'm truly sorry for you. You can't be one of such a house as Breward's without money. He wants many hands, but not the hands of young learners like you. Ah, fourteen is early years at which to begin a self-supporting life. Keep steady, Peter, and let me hear what you settle on. Good-night, lad." So they shook hands, and Peter walked away thinking.

CHAPTER VI.

By eight o'clock the next morning Peter Sands was at Penwarne, and the first person he saw there was Mr. Bloomfield; he was butler at the mansion. His child, a girl of about seventeen, waited on Lady Edith, and did many things in the house under Lady Penwarne's maid, who was a widow, a woman of true piety, and very clever. She liked Helen Bloomfield very much, and Helen liked Mrs. Brading. Of course they all knew Peter Sands.

Peter and Mr. Bloomfield served Mass together that morning. The butler was a man of full fifty years of age; he had been in India with the Colonel, and had lived with him both before and after his marriage. He was, in fact, quite one of the family, and his conduct had always shown that their confidence in his goodness had not been in any way misplaced. Mr. Bloomfield liked Peter, and had a real interest in him, and Peter himself rejoiced in this good man's opinion.

The household and Mrs. Penwarne were at Mass.

Afterwards, Father Joseph took Peter to a room where he saw Mrs. Penwarne; it made him tremble to look at her. She was wrapped up in a warm cloak, though the summer sun already shone hotly; she looked worn and shrunk, and she smiled so sadly when she saw Peter that it required all his strength to keep him from shedding tears.

There was not a single moment of awkwardness. Lady Edith was there and Mrs. Brading, and they stood by the dear lady's chair, and Father Joseph began to speak to Peter.

By a few questions he opened the subject of that last interview, and the boy knowing what was desired, and being helped by the priest, told in a connected manner how everything had happened. His voice faltered once or twice; he could not venture to look at Mrs. Penwarne, but he went on bravely, answering the priest's questions, and getting on to that part of the story where he had to speak of the rosary, which, as he spoke, he took from his breast-pocket, and placed in the hand the listening lady eagerly extended for it.

Up to this moment Mrs. Penwarne had never spoken. But when she took the rosary in her hand, and found that Peter's story was ended, she said, "Come here."

Peter went to her, and stood by her chair, Mrs. Brading making room for him.

"Take this again," she said; "a better gift no man could give to you. Remember what he said, and be good. I will never forget you."

Then she got up. It seemed to Peter as if she had suddenly grown old and infirm. But she was gone, and Mr. Bloomfield came in and beckoned Peter to follow him. Everything was ordered for Peter as if he had been one of the household. And then a note was given to him.

"You must take this to Mr. Breward," said Father Joseph.

"It is to ask him to come here to speak to me about you on Saturday next—it will be the day after the funeral. And think over everything yourself, as well as you are able, and tell me all that you may have in your mind. Mrs. Penwarne will have to go away from this place. With as little delay as possible she wishes to fulfil her husband's wishes and carry out his intentions. He always intended to help you on in life. Say your prayers and *think*; but don't talk. Idle words are lost strength; and you will want all your strength at this crisis in your life."

The experience of the evening before had been sufficient to make Peter acknowledge the wisdom of Father Joseph's advice. He had felt very oddly—he could not explain to himself how he had felt—at James Gardener's, when the new position in which the death of Colonel Penwarne had placed him was brought before him in plain words.

He was not able to support himself. A conceited ignorant lad might have said that he was. But Peter knew better. He knew that he was being brought up for a place in the world which he could not occupy independently for years to come. And in the mean time he knew that he must depend on the

mercy of friends. He argued through the whole matter as he was walking to Stonemoor, with the note to Mr. Breward in his pocket.

"If I am helped by friends," he said, "I must be thankful to God and to them. I have had to be thankful to friends ever since I was an infant. If friends are lost, and if there should be none to succor me, I can go on being grateful for the favors I have already profited by. What I am friends have made me. I have not had any claim on them; I know that. It has all been pure Christian charity. Once Lady Edith said that it was a pleasure to help the deserving, and very often a duty to help the undeserving. I remember her saying it in the school some time ago. I remember how I felt it, and how I made a resolution to be a pleasure to my friends while I was taking their favors, and in future to be, in my turn, a blessing to some one else, if I ever had the chance."

Such ideas occupied Peter's mind as he went on his way. In this manner he was strengthening himself to meet all the village talk of his being a charity-boy. "I am just what God made me," he said to his arguing self, by way of a concluding remark, "and I humbly pray that I may in the future be that which He expects and commands me to be."

And so, having made his mind up to this straight-forward course, he delivered the note, saw Mr. Breward, got his leave for the week's absence, and returned to Father Joseph with Mr. Breward's promise to be at Penwarne the next Saturday afternoon.

And so the week went on. All preparations for the funeral were finished; and on Friday the body of the good man who had been like a father to the people was consigned to the grave. There had never before been such a funeral in that place. Peter was among those who served at the altar. Every heart was saying, "May the souls of the faithful departed, by the mercy of God, rest in peace!"

It may be safely said that not one selfish thought was in Peter's mind that day.

Then there was the reading of the will.

Father Joseph was at the mansion. The family solicitor, Mr. Bennet, was there. Before this gentleman went away, he sent for Mr. Bloomfield, Mrs. Bralting, and the housekeeper. When they entered the dining-room, they found there the priest and Lady Edith.

"I sent for you," said Mr. Bennet, "at Mrs. Penwarne's suggestion, to tell you some part of your late master's will—such points as particularly concern this household. Everything of every kind belongs to his widow, subject to certain legacies, which are to be paid by the executors free of legacy duty. Among these legacies are, to every servant one year's wages. In addition to which will be paid to every servant who has lived over four years in this service four pounds for every year of such service; to every one who has lived over six years in this service, six pounds for every year of service; and to such as have lived over ten years in this service, ten pounds for every year of service. Mr. Bloomfield has lived for over thirty years, I think. To him there is a further legacy of four hundred pounds, and an annuity of twenty pounds. To the boy who was washed ashore here twelve years ago, and whose maintenance and education Colonel Penwarne took on himself, there is a legacy of one thousand pounds. The trustees of this legacy, which was left to him more than seven years ago, are Father Joseph and Mr. James Gardener, in whose house the boy has been brought up.

"Now good-bye," said Mr. Bennet. "We have all of us lost a most excellent friend. I shall be here again soon to settle some affairs with Mrs. Penwarne. The whole of this property goes, I am sorry to say, to a very distant cousin of the Colonel's. The only landed property he had to leave are his estates in Wales and some farms in Buckinghamshire. The future possessor of *this* place is a man not much over thirty, who has never seen it, and who is a Protestant. There was a mixed marriage, and he was brought up by his mother, his father dying when he was young. He lives abroad, and is in the wine-trade. Good-bye once more." And Mr. Bennet made

a hasty retreat, saying he should go to the stables and see after his gig.

Bloomfield followed him.

Father Joseph and Lady Edith went into the garden, that spread away from the end of the house to the grove of beech-trees; and the servants got away to their own rooms. The news of the destiny of old Penwarne fell upon them as a sorrowful blow. They had never heard of it before. But so it was; and all life seemed to change. They could scarcely spare even one thought to themselves or Peter Sands.

CHAPTER VII

But those outside the house had more leisure for thought, and idle tongues were even unusually busy.

There are always plenty of people in a village like Penwarne whose tongues are forever wagging as to their own troubles and their neighbors' doings.

Great surprise was shown over the news of the large sum of money left for the use of Peter Sands; and the greatest imaginable ill-nature was exhibited on the occasion. What had that boy done, people would like to know, that he should be remembered in that manner?

They gossiped over the news. O yes; they were not going to say anything against the servants. They had worked for it. And the Colonel had been very rich, and he had no living children, and he could afford to be generous. But that boy! What had Peter done? They should like to know that.

"You stop," said a harsh voice, well known as Mary Gardener's, to such talkers by the village pump—"you stop. It is not the way to put it. The question is, *not* what has Peter done, but what has the Colonel done? That is the question. He was rich, as you say; and generous, as you say also—and he has done right. Would there have been any justice in his supporting a boy, and paying well for every bit he ate, and even for lodging, clothing, and washing, and giving him a good education, and then leaving him to the work-house? The Colonel has done in his death what he would have done in his life if longer days had been given to him—and I wish you would all hold your tongues."

It was strange to hear Mary talk, who was the most silent person in the village. Some people said that she had never said ten words together since her mother died; others, that her father was a very hard man in private, and that she had had a very difficult life to keep it all pleasant, and that many words had never done with James Gardener, who was a worse man than he seemed. However, whatever the man was in the eyes of Him who sees in secret, he was a great personage now, being associated with Father Joseph as trustee for Peter Sands.

Perhaps other people were found who secretly suspected James Gardener of being worse than he looked.

Mr. Bennet appeared at that pretty cottage-door one afternoon, and went through the orchard-house to see James Gardener; and he began by saying, "The choice of you as one of the trustees for the boy Peter was made seven years ago, when that boy was only seven years old. I want you to refuse to act, and I ask you to give it up. I will prepare a legal document by which another trustee can be appointed, and I think it had better be done directly."

"Why?" asked James Gardener, with a face full of amazement, for truly he had never in his life felt more astonished.

"Because Mrs. Penwarne and others wish it. As executor to the will, jointly with Mrs. Penwarne, I wish it."

"What have I done? Why do you wish it?"

"It is no disgrace that I want to put on you. It is, to speak plainly, because you are not fit for the post. In the seven years that Peter Sands has lived since you were named as trustee the boy has shown great genius, even extraordinary capacity. The trustees have under the will power to apply this money to his use before he is of age if it should be for his

advantage to do so. I think he may enter on a life as to which you cannot be the best judge of its requirements or its necessities. I should like to see a man of a different class of life appointed—of a higher education. We all think so. We mean no harm to you. But I assure you, you will do well for yourself to get rid of all responsibility in this matter."

"But I like the responsibility, and I won't get rid of it," said James, with a smile.

But the smile had no effect on Mr. Bennet. "Take a week to consider it," he said, and walked away.

Mr. Bennet went to the priest's house, and spoke of his visit.

"Why do you think evil of James Gardener?" asked Father Joseph.

"Well, I don't exactly. But I have had in this week two telegrams from Richard Penwarne, the next heir, and this morning a long letter. I never saw him in my life. It seems that as soon as Colonel Penwarne was dead the man wrote to Richard, his heir. By some means unknown to me he had got acquainted with Mr. Penwarne's address, and knew that he would succeed the Colonel. He tells him that he applies for the place of overlooker of the grounds, and he follows up the application by testimonials, and gives references to Fr. deote, the great gardener at Treddington. So Mr. Penwarne answered my telegram announcing his relative's death by another, desiring me to act for him; and this morning's letter tells me to give James Gardener the place he applies for, and to leave the estate to the bailiff, who must, for the present, live in the mansion. He says he has got to start for the Cape in a few days, and that he can't visit England till next year."

"And what have you done?"

"I have sent my brother, who is associated with me in the business, as you know, to the South of France to see Mr. Penwarne. In the mean time I say nothing to James Gardener. But I don't like him."

"And is everything to be arranged thus speedily?"

"Yes; and at Mrs. Penwarne's request."

"I know that she and Lady Edith go to London on Tuesday."

"Yes, and I don't believe that she will ever come back. But mind! I don't like James Gardener."

"You must not prejudice me!" said the priest, with a smile. And so they parted.

CHAPTER VIII.

The meeting that had been appointed to take place at Penwarne with Mr. Breward, on the subject of Peter Sands, had occurred, and had ended in a manner satisfactory to all parties.

Mrs. Penwarne had herself seen Mr. Breward, and he had heard a few facts from her own lips as to Peter, which had made him answer her with great kindness and liberality. She told him that Colonel Penwarne, seeing that Peter showed a mind and abilities above the usual level, had determined to do as much for him as might be necessary to get him the fair reward of industry and intellect, but always with the understanding that he turned out good and steady, as well as apt to learn and willing to work. Dying as he had done, the thousand pounds left in his will represented his good intentions, but that something more would be required to represent the care that, had he lived, he would have bestowed on the boy.

"Can you help me?" had been Mrs. Penwarne's final words to Mr. Breward.

"Of course," he had replied. "The first thing he wants is a home."

"Yes."

"I cannot take him in myself. I have had a great charge thrown on me—a youth of nineteen, not too steady, early allowed to frequent dangerous places, and to be in bad company. He is as much as Mrs. Breward and I can look after. But I think my two aunts would take him in as a lodger, at any rate for a beginning."

"The Miss Lances?"

"Yes. They have had a friend, a lady, living with them; she has gone, and I think they might be persuaded."

"And as to terms?"

"I can't be sure—board, lodging, and washing. There is a very good bed-room, one end fitted up as a sitting-room. I'll let you know. It would be a very genteel sort of home. A worse place, as the opinion of the world goes, however, would do for a working youth. I don't hide that from you. Only I don't know of any at this moment."

"I should like to place him at your aunts'—his case is peculiar—and for six years I will undertake that he shall be provided for. I hope he may be those years with you."

Mr. Breward said he hoped it also; that he liked Peter very much. Even for the sake of her to whom he spoke, he would do his best for Peter.

"But, indeed," he said, "I find no fault with the lad. He is a model of diligence, and I trust my nephew may profit by his example. Our Fred has never had Peter's good teaching. He is my sister's child. She was never a Catholic. I got the grace of conversion and married a Catholic wife. My sister was my senior, and married a man in a good partnership in the coal-trade. Her husband died and left her with this only boy. Prosperity was the ruin of her husband. His recklessness and drinking brought him to his end in a hurry."

Mr. Breward was saying all this as he walked away from Penwarne in Father Joseph's company.

As the priest asked him to go on, he entered into more particulars, and said that his nephew, Fred Drake, would inherit an independence, and that he kept his brother-in-law's share in the coal company, and overlooked and managed the corresponding share of work for this youth's benefit. He said he should give up the Stonemoor branch of business as soon as Fred was twenty-five, at which time, by the terms of the partnership, he should be free, and Fred could act for himself.

"That," he said, "will be in six years' time, just at the date of Peter's being paid his thousand pounds."

When this had been said the priest and Mr. Breward had reached the point in their walk where their ways separated, and after saying "Good-bye" very kindly, Father Joseph took his way to the village.

He met James Gardener, who stopped and said he wanted a word with him.

"Why, sir, should the lawyer want me to retire from my trusteeship?" he asked.

"I can't tell you exactly. He had a strong opinion that a different sort of person would be desirable. There are great and unusual powers given to the trustees in this case, and I am quite certain that when last I spoke to Mr. Bennet I should have been glad to retire from the responsibility myself. But all that is over now. We shall have no need to act on our discretion, as the will allowed. Mrs. Penwarne has taken all upon herself. She pays for Peter for six years, at the end of which period we go out of office."

"Six years!"

"Yes. We don't know his exact age, so a term was fixed. He will be somewhere between twenty and twenty-one by that time. Mr. Breward finds him work."

"And no pay?"

"Yes; as may be agreed on. He will take that for himself. He will have to clothe himself; and we can trust Peter."

"And the interest on the thousand pounds?"

"It will be lodged in the three per cent. Consols, as the will directs; and we have only twice a year to sign a paper by which Mr. Bennett will be enabled to invest the interest for the increase of the principal. It will be an additional two hundred pounds for the boy. Good-morning."

So the priest hurried on; and James Gardener stood still.

The hungry look of this man, whose one fault was a guilty greed of gain, was fixed on Peter's money. "Six years! I shall be only fifty-eight. I will never lose sight of that money. If I get what I have asked for, I shall be well off. I have got my savings. I'll buy a share in the coal company. I'll be

useful. They shall not be able to do without me. I know more of Fred Drake than any of them. Six years! It's odd. Both the boys come into their money at the same time. I'll make my fortune that way. I'll do something to astonish the world one day." And James Gardener, with his avaricious thou-lts, feeling his heart on dangerous food, stood still, pretending to find something to do with a honeysuckle in the hedge loaded with flower, and enjoyed himself.

And now let us turn to Peter, and see how he took his good fortune. It came on him suddenly, after having been called a charity-boy, and after more pity and good advice than has been recorded here.

He was told the whole truth simply.

He put his cap on and went up to the mansion, and asked to see Lady Edith.

She came to him where he stood alone in the housekeeper's room. She was young, not more than twenty years of age, and she was very beautiful, at least in Peter's eyes, for he felt how gracefully she walked, and saw how her black hair was wreathed about her small head by Helen Bloomfield's clever fingers. He felt her sweet, slow, quiet smile, that always seemed so good and true, and he had a strong opinion as to her holiness.

When she came into the room she looked strangely, for her heavy black dress made her seem older. She was pale, and her voice was low and sad.

Peter stood there with a flushed warm face, and bright earnest eyes.

He had to keep his hands tightly clasped as a sort of discipline to prevent his saying too much or speaking too eagerly.

"I am come to say that I am thankful. I have been told. Lady Edith could you tell Mrs. Penwarne?"

"What am I to tell her, Peter?" she asked gently, with a smile covering her quiet face, as she looked at the agitated boy.

"Tell her—tell her that I know—know how good he has been to me; how good she is. I can't say any more—"

"Yes, you can," said the lady.

"What—what must I say? I can say anything. I should have dropped under the weight of it all if I had not seen you, I think. I was sure you would speak for me. What else can I say?"

"O Peter!" The soft dark eyes were fastened on Peter, almost with laughter in them. But they said something to the boy, and he dropped upon his knees.

The tears in his eyes fell now, and he cried out, not loudly, but from the very depth of his grateful soul:

"O Sacred Heart! O Sacred Heart! Heart of Jesus! All the good thoughts they had towards me were the inspirations of that Heart; from the Heart of Jesus flows all good and all joy."

CHAPTER IX.

"Yes," said Lady Edith, when the boy rose from his knees; "I can now say to my dear aunt what she would like to hear. And I can now give you this—" She held a paper in her hand on which some writing showed.

"It is her writing!" exclaimed Peter, his voice trembling with happiness.

"She thought of writing a note to you, to say good-bye. You may never see her again, you know. But instead of a note, such as she might have written, she gave me this paper with a few words on it only. They are the words of one whom the Church has honored, whom we are taught to love." Then she gave the paper into Peter's hands, and he read these words:

"Let us belong to God by love, to our superiors by submission, and to our neighbors by charity.

"We must fight against ourselves to the end, and die with our arms in our hands, for the crown is given only to the victorious."

Peter folded the paper, and placed it between the leaves of a prayer-book he had in his pocket, and then after a few more words he left the room, and, knowing his way quite well, he ran down stairs and out into the shrubbery which sheltered the court at the back of the mansion, and so got out to the public road which led down to the village. He did not loiter. He had one thing more to do before he could rest a moment on the way. He got to the priest's garden, ran through it to the door of the church which Father Joseph used, and was soon on his knees before the Blessed Sacrament.

This boy had never known a relation in his life. He had never had a real home, and as yet he had never earned a day's payment for a day's work. Yet he was there well clothed, well fed, safely housed, wise with good teaching, full of health and vigor, with good prospects in life, and his baptismal innocence unstained by wilful sin. The Church had been his mother, her devout children his friends, her priests his teachers, her promises his inheritance, her Sacraments his strength; and now, on his knees before our Lord, he made his thanksgivings, and he asked for help: "Lord, teach me to love Thee!"

His soul knew, without any more teaching than God had given it, that "the love of Jesus is never idle in the heart in which it dwells." In these few words he asked for more than any tongue can tell.

One day more made the village desolate. Mrs. Penwarne and her niece left the place. A crowd of people went up the hill and lined the road from the entrance gate to the distance of full a mile, and most of them had some little token of mourning about them.

The carriage moved slowly on.

Mrs. Penwarne had had it opened that she might see the faces of many friends as she said "Good-bye." She was in tears, and yet she looked at them, spoke once or twice, and waved her hand in affectionate farewell when the coachman stopped his horses at the turn into the great road to the railway station at Treddington.

Then Lady Edith desired the servant to close the carriage, which was done; and so the sight of their long loved friend was lost, and the people, many of them with hearts full of prayer, returned to their homes.

Several gentlemen from the neighborhood met Mrs. Penwarne and her niece at the railway station, where they remained till she was gone. It was known before night that Mr. Bloomfield had received a telegram to say that they had arrived safely in London, and found all things properly in order.

There was plenty of talk in the village that day.

All the servants had been discharged except Mrs. Brading and two footmen—the elder was to be in the butler's place. All the servants who were discharged and left at Penwarne had leave to stay in the house for a month on board-wages if they liked to do so.

Mr. Bloomfield was going into the coal-trade at Treddington. Mr. Breward had found an opening for him. He had already suited himself with a home. His daughter was to go into a house of business. James Gardener was appointed to the sole care of the grounds, gardens and woods, at a high salary, out of which he was to pay for all extra services, which at many times of the year it would be necessary to find for the woods and the ornamental pleasure-grounds. He was appointed to this by the new possessor of the estate, and Mr. Reves, the bailiff, was to take charge of the mansion and live in it as soon as the servants should have departed.

These arrangements were enough to keep people talking, and talk they did, with all possible freedom. In the midst of it Peter had his trials. Rude lads tried to get some fun out of annoying him. James Gardener, with a little ill-nature, encouraged them. They touched their hats, and called Peter "Squire."

Peter remonstrated once, twice—then threatened, "If you insult me by trying to make me ridiculous, I'll teach you manners."

"Get away to Treddington," said Mrs. Beauchamp, laughing, "and don't try to teach people what they have no desire to

learn. Forget and forgive, and don't look so hot over it!"

"But it is the month of July," expostulated Peter, glad to turn what had vexed him into a little merriment.

"You will be wanted to take the 'writing from dictation' class in the adult school to-night, and to lead the singing. We have to arrange it all on a new plan now we have lost Lady Edith. And, Peter, shake hands with all the young men and bid them good-bye. Ask for their good wishes in the work of making a home for yourself. Part in a friendly way with those who are older and worse off than yourself, and don't mind about boys and children. Go and get the books out; we shall be very busy to-night. After you have prepared the rooms go to James Gardener and bid him good-bye, and go to Mrs. Roper for the same purpose. I would not have you go anywhere else. I want to go to Treddington myself to-morrow, and you can drive me in the pony-carriage."

So Mrs. Beauchamp set Peter to work, and arranged for his departure from Penwarne.

PART II.

CHAPTER I.

It is almost impossible to imagine any house of its kind more perfect than that occupied by Miss Jane Lance and her sister. These ladies were between sixty and sixty-five years of age; very good, decidedly well-looking, always well dressed; models of neatness and niceness, and perfectly well-mannered.

In former days they had kept a young ladies' school, and many residents in Treddington had received their early instructions at their hands. Mrs. Penwarne knew them well, and Lady Edith knew them also. Colonel Penwarne had been in the frequent habit of calling to see them, and fruit, flowers, and game—through summer and winter—had regularly been sent to them by his orders.

These good ladies were converts of about ten years' standing, and even their most disapproving neighbors could not do other than admit the firmness with which they had carried out their convictions, and the quiet consistency which marked their daily life. They had now two pupils, their nephew's little girls, and they had had a lady living with them for two years. This lady had lately gone with some friends to New Zealand.

Into the room occupied by this friend Peter Sands had been introduced by Mr. Breward, on the evening of the day when he had driven Mrs. Beauchamp in the pony-carriage to Treddington, with the boy employed to take care of the pony in the seat behind, who took Peter's place and drove his mistress back to Penwarne, after she had paid a visit to Miss Lance and her sister, and left Peter Sands standing by Mr. Breward's side at the door of his new home.

Having brought him to his new home, in the midst of scenes very different from all that he had left—among new friends, and surrounded by new duties—we must let three years pass over Peter's life before we look at him again.

After three years.

From nearly fourteen or fifteen years of age to probably nearly eighteen.

What was Peter like?

Let us take a look at him. He is in rather a remarkable situation.

He is, in fact, on the roof of Miss Lance's house, just where a stack of chimneys comes up, and there, where the flat roof allowed it, he has constructed a roomy place for plants and flowering shrubs, with a glass roof, and warmed by the heat of the kitchen fire. He is most successful in his gardening in this situation, and supplies Miss Lance with roses in the winter; and dwarf fruit-trees—plums and peaches—beautiful both in fruit and flower; and as to camellias and azalias, all Treddington comes to see them as they adorn a flower-stand in the drawing-room.

James Gardener comes too, and admires and laughs. "He would never have grown them," he says, "if it were contrivance had not been necessary for collecting, heating, and getting water, and keeping an equal temperature, and such like. It was always the machinery part of a thing that pleased Peter Sands."

Peter has become a very fine young man; tall, strongly made, and decidedly good-looking. He has improved in every way. His education has gone on. He has gone to an evening class, and has been found to have a decided turn for mathematics. He works at learning Latin with the priest, and he can talk French with Miss Lance and her sister, and little Annie and Jane Breward, with considerable fluency.

He is in Mr. Breward's counting-house, and gets a respectable salary.

He does not live for himself alone.

Those words which were among the last ever spoken by Colonel Penwarne, "Do a little labor for His dear sake," have lived in Peter's heart and borne good fruit.

He is a member of the Society of St. Vincent of Paul, he belongs to the Young Men's Catholic Association, he serves Mass daily, and is steady at his duties; and perhaps it ought to be mentioned in his praise that he is not spoilt by the interest taken in him by Miss Lance and her sister. They admire and love him. They pray for him, and give thanks for him too. There is not anything within their power that they would not do for Peter Sands. And Peter is grateful. He knows how good they are, and he yields to their wise wishes for his improvement.

They have provided the means for his obtaining a good knowledge of English literature; they have been great helps to him in his scientific pursuits; and Miss Jane, who was really a learned woman, had been a great assistance and pleasure to him in the study of mathematics.

These dear ladies were glad not to sink into idleness after lives of teaching and learning, of reading and thought. They were very glad to be of use to their young friend, and they had reason to be gratified at the youth's progress.

Life had become a prosperous thing for Peter Sands; and prosperity is a trial—we all know that. Yet, perhaps, all this prosperity was a less trial to Peter, because of a certain simplicity of character which belonged to him, and which the early, faithful, persevering teaching of holy friends had fostered and strengthened.

The youth still carried about with him the spirit of his childhood. There was meekness, frankness, and candor in all his conduct. The aged loved him, the poor welcomed him; children ran to him as if he were still a child like themselves. And this was because he was a Christian; because he not only knew the Catholic faith and believed it, but because he also practised it always; because he not only loved God, but served Him in his duty towards his neighbor, and his forgetfulness of self.

By his distaste for all that was against the Catholic Church, or in any degree contrary to Christian morals, or injurious to Christian perfection, he showed his love for God. And yet he was not quick to see evil in his neighbors; he lived in holy ignorance of other people's faults, and by giving them credit for the sincerity that lived in his own heart he led many to righteousness, without being aware of the good he was doing and had done.

Such in youth was Peter Sands.

Mrs. Beauchamp, who watched him closely, and gave him many a prayer as she sat busy over her good works in her pretty little paneled parlor, said that he owed something to the fact of his being so truly an orphan, without parents or relatives, without a friend from any family connection. God alone had given him all that he had; God alone had raised up for him friends, teachers, home, sustenance, and the very garments that for many years had clothed him.

Millicent, the maid servant at Father Joseph's, used to consider all this sometimes. She had lived there since her childhood, as we know, and was a faithful friend in the household.

"Do you ever think it all through?" she said one day to Peter. "Do you ever think how few human attachments you have any right to, and what such a state should do for you?"

"I am free to serve God," answered Peter. "Free to do a little good for His dear sake; free to be thankful, and to count up His gifts, and to say after every reckoning, 'God alone!'"

Such was Peter Sands after these three years. And now let us look at our other friends and acquaintances.

Father Joseph's hair was grayer, and he stooped a little. In all other things to outward eyes he was just the same. Peter used to get to Penwarne, occasionally, and if he could get there very early on a summer morning, he would serve Mass as if he had never left the village and was still a young boy. On such days he would enjoy a ramble down the sands, standing still for a moment's thought where the pile of rocks stood, beneath the shelter of which he had been washed ashore, scarred and bruised, but saved for a good life by the will of God. He would then visit old friends. He would have tobacco for one, a packet of tea for another, smiles and happy words for all. Old Mrs. Roper lived now with Mary Gardener, in the pretty house which had long been Peter's home. James Gardener had prospered; prospered wonderfully. He had taken a house at Treddington, near Mr. Bloomfield's coal-stores—he was in partnership with Mr. Bloomfield—and his sister, Mrs. Mills, he had placed in his new house to keep it, and look after the counting-house; to keep all clean and safe, and be a useful matronly help to Mr. Bloomfield and his daughter. Helen Bloomfield was in a dress-maker's house. She lived there. But when her father could have her at the house near the coal-stores she went gladly, and many a happy hour did she pass with him, Mrs. Mills acting as her friend in many ways, and growing very fond of Helen. It pleased Mrs. Mills to find James Gardener prosper so well, and grow rich so speedily. Her rooms were gay with flowers from Penwarne, and she made her brother's bargains with the fruit-shops at Treddington, and proved herself to be a valuable steward to him in such matters. James Gardener lived in the gardener's cottage at Penwarne. He had the gardens in his own hands, and made money by them.

Penwarne House had been let for the last two years.

The heir had come to England and visited Mr. Bennet. He had looked over Penwarne, and pronounced the mansion to be too large for his own occupation. He had said that it required a man of fortune to live in it, and keep up everything properly. And so it had been let to a wealthy tenant, who was equally kind to Catholics and Protestants, and very civil to Father Joseph.

Mrs. Roper and Mary Gardener washed for the mansion, and as Mr. Cleverly disliked all trouble, and wished to make the term of his tenancy easy and comfortable, he let the first arrangement go on with James Gardener, and himself purchased the fruit and vegetables required for the house.

A small greenhouse and garden were kept apart for Mrs. Cleverly's pleasure, and James was paid for keeping them in order. It turned out to be a very profitable arrangement.

James Gardener entered into many very paying speculations; not only in plants, shrubs, and trees, but in buying and selling timber. He had built some small houses, bought land, let it out at high rents as cottage gardens, and, being liberal with labor, gifts of seeds, and valuable advice, he became a very popular landlord. It was evident that he was growing rapidly rich, and people began to wonder where the money came from.

Then it was said that James Gardener had been a saving man all his life, and had wisely kept his money safe till he had found investments making sure, speedy and rich returns. And James was happy. He loved money with all his soul.

CHAPTER II.

Peter Sands did not lead a dull life at Treddington. The ladies in whose house he lodged saw many friends, and they all got to know and like Peter. Mr. Breward, too, finding Peter so thoroughly well conducted, and so entirely to be depended upon, introduced him to many persons whose acquaintance was a credit to him.

He had another and a very powerful reason for making Peter known to persons whom he valued: he did it for the sake of Frederick Drake. He wished Peter to influence his nephew. Though Drake was not a Catholic he was one to acknowledge merit, and to distinguish good from evil, and he liked Peter. They had become close friends before this three years of Peter's residence in Treddington had run out; but this friendship bore sorrowful fruit often, and Peter was often sad about Fred Drake. The young man was in Mr. Bennet's office. He was clever enough, of a lively disposition, and fond of society. In fact he was too fond of company, and he liked the society of those who flattered him. This evil had taken deep root in Fred's heart before he knew Peter. On knowing him he felt a longing for his praise; but though he found his new acquaintance a cheerful educated companion, he did not get from him that wordy praise which his heart hungered after.

It was not a good youth's real heartfelt approbation that Drake craved after; what he enjoyed was praise; the incense of flattery was dear to him; he would do anything to get it. He was the victim of self-love.

But there was, nevertheless, a great deal of good in Frederick Drake.

Talking, boastful, conceited, worldly company had made him what he was. He knew that he should be what *his* small world called *quite a rich man* in a few years' time, and so he worked only just enough to keep his place and avoid Mr. Bennet's displeasure; and he put no heart into his work at all.

Peter was too modest a youth to be over ready with advice; but even Peter took Fred to task at last. And, in fact, up in that glass-roofed bower which Peter had on the roof of Miss Lance's house, they once got quite angry over it. Frederick said that he was then twenty-two, and that he had been a petted boy, and had begun life late; that he had very large expectations from the coal company, in which his late father's share was of considerable value, and he thought that he ought to have been placed in the office of the coal business, and not at Mr. Bennet's. Also, he thought that there had been a great injustice in postponing his coming of age till he was twenty-five. "I ought to have had it all now," he said angrily. This was Fred Drake's view of his position.

On the other side, Peter pleaded in this way—that he had been brought up to the profession of a gentleman; that the coal-merchants, in whose firm his father had been, had made their own bargain when Fred was an infant in his mother's arms, and that they had not wanted his services as a boy. That, ever since his father's death, three hundred a year had been received from the firm, of which two hundred a year had been used to pay off the principal and interest of money borrowed on that security to pay off his father's debts, and that these debts would be paid in three years' time, when Fred would either go into the business himself or receive seven thousand pounds, at the option of the members of the firm. "You will," concluded Peter, "be, at twenty-five, a member of a good profession, with a fortune of seven thousand pounds, no one having lost a farthing by your father, and yourself being uninjured."

When Peter, on this memorable summer evening, said this, Fred laughed—"Which is all you know about it," said Fred.

But Peter reminded Fred that he could not help knowing the truth; in his position, trusted in various ways by Mr. Breward, he had been told the circumstances, and made familiar with the accounts. "You know this," he said.

"And do you suppose I have lived on the beggarly allow-

ance of fifty pounds a year made me by my uncle? The rest of the hundred a year is supposed to pay for my board and lodging in his family. Of course I know that he invests it, because he said that it may buy me furniture for a house in the days to come; but still I have for myself—for clothes, pocket-money, amusements, everything—this paltry fifty pounds a year. Why, it can't be done."

"You don't subscribe to more amusements than I do: you are not dressed better; you have no more ready cash; I have only forty pounds a year for all you reckon up. I am in as good company: I—"

"O, stop. Yes; you are in as good company—yes, a good deal better company. You are steady, charitable, with a sovereign for the priest, and more for education. O yes; don't get so red. Don't I know? And you build a greenhouse, and row a boat, and study geology, and have a collection of fossils—"

"I'll give you a thrashing if you don't stop, or kick you down-stairs, which would be easier," said Peter quietly.

"Why, so you may, and so you could; but don't you know that it is *bad* company that spends your money? What has a pack of card-sharpers and money-lenders got to do with good company? Was it good company that took a hundred pounds out of my pocket at the last Treddington races?"

"But that was all settled. Mr. Breward got to know, and he spoke to you, and paid it."

"It was paid—that is, one hundred was paid out of that store that he has laid by instead of taking it from my board—yes; but, Peter—"

"Well?" It was quite a terrible moment to this youth, for he felt that something bad was coming. "Well?"

"That was scarcely half of what I owed. He was so good and forgiving about it, I had not the heart to tell him that he had heard only the half of the folly I had committed. So I had to get the rest."

"Get the rest!" exclaimed Peter.

"Yea, of course. *I was obliged to do it.* There would be a clamor if I had not paid the debts of which my uncle did not know."

"And how did you get it?" asked Peter, very quietly.

"Of course you know."

"I know that there are money-lenders, who would advance you small sums for a larger sum to be received in three year's time."

"Just so," said Fred, nodding his head.

"And which of them accommodated you?"

"James Gardener, of course."

Peter felt as though he had been stabbed; but he hid the pain by turning his head aside, and pretending to be attracted by the view that lay spread below them.

"Look out, Fred. See the shipping, the wharves, the store-houses; the masts are as thick as a forest; well, not all the wealth there represented could stand what you are doing, if carried on perseveringly by lavish hands like yours. You are not fond of work. You have not the perseverance, perhaps not the constitution, to make your fortune for yourself. You have had a sum of money secured to you, and you are spending it; that is, you are giving it away to money-lenders before you have seen it yourself. How much do you think is gone?"

"A thousand pounds," said Fred.

"It's tea-time," said Peter. "Will you go home and bring your accounts to my room, and let me look them through with you? I have rather a head for that kind of thing, you know."

Peter spoke very quietly. He was afraid of vexing Fred, and making him repent of having trusted him; and he was longing from the bottom of his heart to do him good. He would not wait for an answer. He took Fred with him to Miss Lance's tea-table. He even stayed there while Fred sang songs to Miss Lance's accompaniment. But at last, about nine o'clock, he had Fred safe in his room, with all the sad truth spread out before him.

A far worse story it was than even Fred himself seemed to know; and there were a few bursts of desperation from the misguided man while the whole history was being revealed by

Peter, and placed in black and white before him.

There must, however, be just a word of mercy spoken in Fred's favor. Until he entered his uncle's house, his bringing up had been one continued act of indulgence. His own desires had been his only law. The effects were now sad indeed.

CHAPTER III.

In this way, and with this knowledge, closed the third year of Peter's life at Treddington.

Time went on; a fourth and fifth year passed.

Peter had risen to a place of trust. All Mr. Breward's accounts passed through his hands.

It was a great deal to do, and it required a steady head and extraordinary accuracy.

Peter had invented an improvement to the ordinary machinery used in Mr. Breward's works at Stonemoor, which resulted in a great saving of labor and risk to the men, and of money to their employers. This thing had been the work of his leisure hours. All his days were absorbed by the accounts, and his daily labor was of an anxious sort. Peter, however, stood it well. He liked Mr. Breward very much, and he would have done anything for him.

Mr. Breward looked on Peter with gratitude as well as pleasure, and the dear Miss Lances were prouder than ever of him. In fact all Treddington by this time took an interest in Peter; and not only Father Joseph, but also the priest of the Treddington mission, Dr. Beauclerk, watched him with joy and thankfulness.

When his invention was completed, and liked by masters and men, Mrs. Penwarne was written to, and she sent Peter messages through Father Joseph, and she asked him to come to London and explain his work to her. With extreme pleasure Peter went to London, and was taken by Dr. Beauclerk to Mrs. Penwarne. He was so happy, he could have knelt to thank her for all she had done for him. So genuine, however were his feelings that she felt all he wished to say; she knew him for what he was, and he had an inexpressibly pleasing sensation of being understood as he answered her questions and stood happy beneath her smiles.

Peter and Dr. Beauclerk lunched with Mrs. Penwarne. She sent her servant's away, and Lady Edith, who was there, said, "You and I, Peter Sands, must wait on our elders to-day." And this they did, as far as such attendance was needed; and then he returned to the station by himself, for Dr. Beauclerk was going to spend a few days with a friend.

Before he left Mrs. Penwarne's presence she had said these words to him: "When your salary was raised about two years ago, you refused to take any longer the money I had paid Miss Lance for your living there. I ought to say that they refused to have a higher payment when I offered it to them, as you grew into manhood. I laid by the money when you no longer accepted it; you will receive it next year with the money left you by my husband. What I gave you only represented in some degree the faithful interest with which he would have regarded you had he lived. My young friend, I ask your prayers."

Then he began to speak, or rather to try to speak, for his heart was too full for him to say what he felt; but she stopped him.

"Lay up any gratitude you may feel for him and me in that Sacred Heart where we shall be sure to find it. I am old, Peter," she went on, with her calm eyes fixed smilingly on the young man's face. "Death is near. Death, it is said, may overtake the young, but the old go forth to meet him. Well, remember this, in the life that lies before you, that God, in His might and mercy *never* deserts those who serve Him—*never!* Never leaves those to themselves whose faith and devotion are known unto Him."

"That is how we pray," said Peter.

"That is what we experience," said Mrs. Penwarne. And

so they parted.

As Peter came back in the railway-carriage, those words, "whose faith and devotion are known unto Him," seemed to be all round him, as it were, in the air. Mrs. Penwarne's sweet gentle voice seemed to linger in his ears.

When he reached Treddington he went straight to the Catholic church. He walked in and knelt down. Several people were there saying their evening prayers. Still in his heart those words were sounding, and that strong assurance that under no conceivable circumstances should that soul be deserted or left in any way alone whose faith and devotion God knew. The words were familiar enough, but they seemed to have gathered a remarkable power that day. Then Peter went home, was happy and merry too, with Miss Lance and Miss Jane; he met Mr. and Mrs. Breward there, and the two young girls and Frederick Drake. Fred sang out of tune, and his cousins laughed at him. Peter tried a trio with the girls, and they had an *encore*. He told them of his visit, of all that could interest or amuse his hearers, and went tired, but well pleased, to rest.

He paid one visit to his bower among the chimney-sticks. The pale clear light of a full moon fell upon Treddington, and lighted up the docks, and fell on the broad water, which heaved gently beneath the sky. The shadows were broad and black; the outlines of the buildings, distinctly marked, gave grandeur to things which were not worth a second glance by day. A great silence seemed to have fallen on that populous city, so full of life, so crowded with human interests, where the battle of good and evil went on ceaselessly, and where the cause of Christ in each human heart was being lost or won. Peter turned his eyes from the view of the town so full of life, so crowded with souls, and looked at the opposite side of the landscape which was spread at the back of the terrace of which Miss Lance's house was the most spacious, standing at the end, and having a garden at the back and a shubbery at the side. There lay a long level tract of grass-land, where a river flowed which now showed in the light like silver by the side of the walk through the long meadows which led to the cricket-ground, and by which he often walked to Stonemoor. The contrast of the two scenes was great, and his heart seemed to swell with many meditations.

How much would he, Peter Sands, in the life of his manhood have to do with all he then looked upon? He could not live forever protected and believed in as he then lived in his fair, prosperous and successful youth.

Then he remembered the last gift that Mrs. Penwarne had sent him, nearly five years back, by the hands of Lady Edith; and standing there, so near heaven as it looked, and so above the world, he repeated the words that written paper contained:

"Let us belong to God by love, to our superiors by submission, and to our neighbors by charity.

"We must fight against ourselves to the end, and die with our arms in our hands, for the crown is given only to the victorious."

So ended the day,

The next day ended in a very different manner.

Once more the moon rose with its full, fair light, as full and fair as the light of the night before, to the gazers on the quiet open country and in the noisy, crowded streets; but Peter had walked to the top of the town, where the streets had come to an end, and there he loitered, where well-built brick cottages stood at short distances by the wayside. He waited for an omnibus which would soon pass by.

It came, and he got up to an outside seat, and went as far as where Mrs. Penwarne, on the day of her departure, had taken her last leave of her village friends, and proceeded to the Treddington railway station. Just where Lady Edith had ordered the carriage to be closed, and where their last leave had been taken of Penwarne, Peter Sands got down; he saw the omnibus go upon its way, and he stood still, lonely and thoughtful.

CHAPTER IV.

In a minute more Peter was going at a good pace down the hill to the village of Penwarne. He passed the stile on which he had sat watching and waiting for Father Joseph on the day of Colonel Penwarne's death. There was the same sort of bit of dry earth as that on which he had knelt down when he found himself alone, and prayed for the dead. Five years had passed, and, with him, all things had changed. He, the village boy, the child maintained and taught by the bounty of Colonel Penwarne, was there again—a man. A man in independent circumstances, with excellent prospects in life; admired, respected, sought after, trusted.

Up to that day how plain his way had seemed to be! how easy it had been to walk in it! But now something had happened, and his way was dark. He wanted guidance, and he was going to seek it of Father Joseph.

He got to the priest's house. It was approaching ten o'clock at night. "Can I sleep here?" he asked of Millicent, as she opened the door and let him in with words of welcome.

"I suppose so; there is no one here, and the spare room is always ready. Does Missis expect you, or have you written to Father Joseph?"

"No; I am not expected. Let me see Father Joseph directly."

"He is in the church," said Millicent.

On that Peter went by the priest's door through the sacristy into the church, and he saw there Father Joseph on his knees. He knelt down in his sight and prayed heartily till the priest rose up, when he followed him. "Why, Peter!"

"Yes. Let me stay here for the night."

"Of course. There is nothing wrong?"

"I want to speak to you. Can I have half an hour directly?"

Father Joseph brought Peter to his own room. He closed the window, through which a strong fragrance from the sweet-brier had suddenly reminded Peter of old days; and then he drew a dark curtain close, and lighted the lamp.

Peter seated himself, produced a pocket-book, and said, "I have been thinking myself half crazed. I can't act for myself; I have been miserable. It seems to me as if I could have borne anything else in life better than the thing that has happened. And yet I have made up my mind what to do; only I can't do it without your help; and if I could I wouldn't. The decision must lie with you."

"What is the matter, then? And what is it that you wish to do?"

"This is it," said Peter. He dropped his face in his hands for a minute, as he sat with his elbows resting on the table; and when he raised his hands, it was a puzzled and very anxious countenance that the priest looked on, and it made Father Joseph feel astonished.

"Tell it all simply—tell all, straight out," he said, speaking very seriously, and with that gentle air of holy authority that Peter had always loved to listen to and obey.

But now Peter began to make a bargain. "Everything must be in perfect confidence. You will promise solemnly never to betray what I shall say to you."

"Speak out. Tell all. Don't make conditions. If you cannot trust my judgment and my discretion, don't speak at all."

"Father," said Peter, pleadingly, "it is about some one—not exactly about myself. Mr. Breward has been robbed, and I know all. And I want—well, promise to treat this as a confidence which is not to be betrayed."

"I promise," said the priest.

"Then look here." Peter took out of his breast-pocket a small tied-up parcel, and as he opened it he said "This morning Mr. and Mrs. Breward went off early to take their little girls to school at Boulogne. They are going to be absent ten days; they are going to spend a day at Amiens, and they are

going to Paris." Father Joseph signified by a movement of his head that he knew all that.

"Yesterday I was all day in London," said Peter. "This morning I went to the railway-station to see Mr. Breward off, and be of use to them if I could. After he was in the carriage—there were other people with them—he took a card out of his pocket, wrote a few words on it, gave it to me as I stood by the window, and said, 'See to it, will you?' I answered 'Yes;' and the train went off. Well, there is the card;" and Peter put into Father Joseph's hand a card with these words on it, written under Mr. Breward's name:

"I received ninety-seven pounds this morning, and gave it to Fred to place in the bank for me."

Father Joseph read the words, and said, "Go on."

"Fred was at Miss Lance's last night. He was rather odd and agitated, sang out of tune, and did not take his cousin's laughter with as much good temper as usual. As I walked back with the card in my hand it all came before me very vividly. I had known that Drake had frequently got himself into money difficulties. It was then ten o'clock, and the bank could only be just opened. I went straight to Mr. Breward's house and asked for Fred. He was gone out. I went to Mr. Bennet's office. He had not been there. I went to the bank and saw Mr. Maynard. He had not been there. I returned to Mr. Breward's. I found Fred in the dining-room, and he was drinking wine—helping himself to what had been left on the sideboard. I made no observation on that. But it was very unlike Fred to drink in the morning. He has no bad propensity of that kind as far as I know, and I think I know him well. I said, 'I want to have that ninety-seven pounds banked, Fred. Come and do it. I am going to balance books to-day.' He turned white and hastily drank another glass of wine. 'What do you know about it?' he said. 'Don't I know all about it? Does it not come into my business to know? I promised Mr. Breward—' I never said any more. Fred staggered towards me. I thought he was trying to strike me. I took him by the shoulders and flung him into a great chair. I know how to manage Fred; you must believe me there. Sharp words are the best weapons. I said, 'You give up that money, or I'll expose you.' I held him by his collar. I said, 'No nonsense. You know you are not fit to be trusted with money. You know I may be called to account for not having cautioned your uncle against you. An unexpected payment was made only this morning after the trunks were coded, and you have the money. Come with me to the bank immediately. I suspect you—I have reason to suspect you. Why were you drinking before twelve o'clock? Answer me about the money.' I shook his senses into him as he sat staring in the chair. 'Come,' I said, 'out with the truth, and make haste too. Where's the money?' Then, half choked as he was, with his own agitation and my usage of him, he gasped out, 'Hold, hold! I have not got it. I—I—I've paid it away—borrowed it—only borrowed it: I'm going to confess it all when my uncle comes back.' I would not listen to that sort of thing. And at last to make my story as short as I can, I got out of him that he had paid the ninety-seven pounds to a man to whom he had made a boast of having the money, and who had obtained power over him."

"And you have long known that he was untrustworthy as to money matters?" said Father Joseph.

"For two years, at least, I have known that he spent, gambled, and made bets on the turf, beyond his means, and that he had gone to money-lenders, and that he had been accommodated by their giving him the sums required, on his placing in their hands security for repayment; the sums to be paid exceeding very largely what he had received—to be paid when he received his money in a year's time. Fred's character is guessed at, and he will never be received into the firm. He will have his seven thousand pounds, and so be got rid of. I know that. I have been hard at work with him all day. He would not have three thousand pounds of his own if he were to get it all directly and pay up his liabilities. How much he will sink in another year, if he can't be helped out of his

troubles, nobody knows."

"And who is his enemy in all this? He must have dealing with some one who takes Satan's side in this matter. Who is he?"

"James Gardener," said Peter.

And then there was silence between those two for a moment, for Father Joseph was shocked, and for the moment, puzzled.

"Peter," he said, "have you any idea what it would be best to do?"

"I know what I *want* to do—what it would be best for *me* to do."

"Tell me."

"This is it. The whole story has been revealed to me. Fred has not concealed anything. I know all. His enemy throughout, his tempter, the suggester of evil, and the man who has stolen his money from him, and greatly enriched himself by iniquitous gains, is James Gardener. There is a second sinner who pretends to lend the money, but he is James Gardener's tool. He lends little more than his name, that Gardener may not get talked about. James Gardener makes it worth this poor wretch's while, of course; but when Fred's affairs come to be settled the money will flow into James Gardener's pocket, for he has all the securities; and he has this morning walked off with ninety-seven pounds in hard cash. This money must be repaid immediately. It cannot be got from James Gardener without a thorough exposure of all his transactions, and that would be his ruin. He saved my life; he found me on the rocks; his sister took care of me; and for twelve years James and his daughter and Mrs. Mills gave me a good home. Though they were paid, they did *that* for me which I would now repay. So my desire is this. There is money which I can have with the leave of my trustees. You and he can give your consent, and I can go to London to-morrow, get the money, and lodge it in the bank before twelve o'clock in the afternoon. This will give us power over James. We will use this power in this way: Mr. Breward shall hear of the state of his nephew's affairs, and he shall know that James has made himself sole creditor. An arrangement must be come to by which James shall immediately receive a certain sum, and by this payment Fred must be free. Then we will get Fred Drake out of Treddington. This morning's work, which was a barefaced theft, and known to be a theft by James Gardener, who, in fact suggested it, has put the power into our hands. By paying back the money I can hold James to the course I have mentioned. Will you consent?"

"Where is James?"

"I sent a messenger to him this afternoon. I told him to come here to-morrow at ten o'clock to meet me, as he might be required to give his signature with yours to a paper of importance, and that he must not fail to be punctual. I received an answer to the effect that he would be here as desired."

"And when he comes, what will you say?"

"I will say everything to him that I have now said to you. I shall tell him all I know. I shall say that Fred is to be saved; and I will put all the money-lending, everything, *except this morning's theft*, into Mr. Breward's hands, or into the hands of some one whom he shall appoint to-morrow."

"Let me thoroughly understand you. You will tell Mr. Breward all about his nephew, only concealing this morning's theft; and you will cover that with money of your own; paying it in to-morrow before the bank closes, in order to save James Gardener, who saved your life as an infant, from ruin."

"Yes."

"I cannot consent to that," said Father Joseph. "Why should not this man Gardener refund the money himself?"

"O, he shall if he will, of course," said Peter. "But that must be the next consideration. I will do nothing to *make* him. I could not *make* him pay the money without handing him over to the law, and that is the thing I want to avoid. But he shall be an honest man if he will."

"Now, Peter, listen to this. Mr. Breward *has a right* to know all about his own affairs, and all about the conduct of

his nephew concerning them ; and *you have no right to conceal anything.*"

CHAPTER V.

"Did you intend to try to keep this repayment of Mr. Breward's money a secret *always*?" asked Father Joseph of Peter the next morning, as they sat together after Mass.

"I did, though I hate secrets," said Peter. "If Fred would tell his uncle himself that he had stolen his money I should like him all the better for it. For myself I still wish two things ; not to be the means of ruining James Gardener—I wish to hide his sin, and to make amends for it ; and I wish by this act to bring him to come to an immediate settlement with Fred, and to deliver Fred from temptation in future. As to the money, I don't care about that. Fred may repay me if he pleases, and if ever he is able to do so ; and even Gardener may refund the money—perhaps he will. The real use of my money is that, with your help, I can put the right sum into the bank before three o'clock this afternoon. That is enough for me to think of at present."

"There comes James Gardener. He is punctual," said Father Joseph.

There was no time to be lost. As soon as he was seated Peter began. "I have sent for you because I thought your signature might be wanted ; but first of all"—he looked straight into James' face with his honest courageous eyes—"it is no use mincing matters, and the plainest words are easiest understood. Yesterday you induced Frederick Drake to steal ninety-seven pounds of his uncle's money, and you received the same, knowing it to be stolen. In fact, by threats and hard talking you *made* Fred steal it. It must be repaid. It must be in the bank to-day. If not paid to-day, I shall charge both Fred Drake and you before the magistrate."

"You speak loud, young man."

"No, I do not," said Peter. "But I speak plainly, as I must speak. I have here all Fred Drake's accounts with you ; every letter and every document is in my possession. All that has been going on between you is now come to an end. But Mr. Breward's money is *my* concern, and must be this day refunded. Where is the money?"

"You have no proof that I ever had it."

"You deny it?"

"I said you had no proof."

"Then I give you in charge." Peter rose from his seat, and said, "May I drive back in your pony-carriage, Father Joseph? I shall scarcely be in time if I walk—you know what I mean."

Peter looked very pale.

Then Father Joseph spoke, "Gardener," he said, "your own conscience is your best adviser. You received this money?"

"He owed me that, and more."

"That is, young Drake owed you that, and more?"

"But I won't convict myself."

"He has given you up—Drake has. Peter Sands wants to keep this last act, in which the bank and Mr. Breward are concerned, separate from all private accounts which may lie between you and Drake. This can only be done by refunding the money. It is right for you to do so."

"I can't, sir."

It seemed that this wretched man was unable to do other than utter the truth in the presence of God's priest.

"Do you realize the consequences? Peter Sands cannot do other than have the culprit secured. He cannot join in cheating Mr. Breward."

"I do not deny that I took the money, because he owed me that and more. But I cannot repay it to-day. I have to give three days' notice where I have placed it. It is not in my power to raise ninety-seven pounds by three o'clock." The man who now saw his position, betrayed his misery by a sob.

"I must abide the consequences. I can't do it. I could do it

three days hence, and I will do it. Won't that do?"

"We cannot have any secret about it," said Father Joseph. "This youth, this Peter Sands, whose life you saved, desires to cover the debt by money of his own, which you, and I, as his trustees, could enable him to get this afternoon. To-morrow is the day, as he has told me, on which he sees and signs the bank-books in Mr. Breward's place. He desires to shield you, knowing the ruin that exposure must bring on you ; but by this act he not only wishes to save your character, but he wishes to conceal yesterday's theft—I call it by no milder name—from Mr. Breward. *But I will not consent to his misleading Mr. Breward.* His employer has a right to know what he knows. So I only mention Peter's wishes to convince you of his good-will. I refuse my consent to any secrecy between him and his employer. By your own act the money can be placed to Mr. Breward's account three days hence. Mr. Breward will have the circumstances pointed out to him, and the wrong day of payment will be explained in the only honorable way—by telling him the truth. The ninety-seven pounds will appear in the next month's account with the bank, and not in this month's account—this month's account will be made up to-morrow."

It would be impossible to imagine anything more utterly fallen and miserable than was James Gardener's whole appearance and manner. He would have given up all his ill-gotten gains, from the first beginning of his evil courses, to keep the transactions of the morning before from Mr. Breward. He said that he knew Mr. Breward's disposition, his severity, his determination of character, and that he would never forgive him for having had anything to do with his nephew, or interfering with his affairs.

It wrung Peter's heart to listen to him.

But Father Joseph was firm and resolute.

"I can do no other than I have said. You must make out an order for the ninety-seven pounds before you leave this house ; and you and I must go together to the bank where you have deposited your money without delay. In this way public exposure may be saved ; and when Mr. Breward arranges his nephew's affairs with you, which he will do on his return—I shall hasten his return, if possible—you will find, I think, that you can trust his kindness. He will neither wish to expose his nephew nor you."

Peter had not had to say more than a few words. The priest's pony was harnessed, and all three left the house together. James Gardener, accompanied by Father Joseph, went to the bank where he deposited money, and arranged for the ninety-seven pounds to be paid to Mr. Breward's account at the bank at Treddington in three day's time ; and then Gardener went back to Penwarne on foot, and Father Joseph drove to Miss Lance's house to tell Peter that the thing was done.

At kind Miss Lance's he found Peter involved in another distress. Drake had been there to find Peter, and hearing of his having gone to Father Joseph, he had exhibited so much distress that the dear ladies had tried to comfort him, and of course asked what was the matter ; and Frederick Drake had told all. It almost made Father Joseph laugh to see Peter's face as he said :

"I couldn't have kept the thing quiet, however much I had tried. While I was planning the way to make restitution in secret, Frederick was explaining it all."

For James Gardener's sake, Father Joseph now told Frederick Drake to hold his tongue.

"We can depend on both of you," he said to the good ladies ; "and I command Frederick, in honor's name, to hold his tongue."

"You are no better than Gardener," he said to Fred. "You have no right to fling a stone at him. You were willing to fall and glad to be tempted. If you were a Catholic, my poor young friend, I should speak differently. But this I can say to you—that people who, to show their own penitence, betray the sins of their neighbors, are not often believed in. Don't talk about James Gardener ; think of yourself. Is it not true that, if you had not been so easy a prey, he would not have

been so great a sinner?"

All this was said boldly, and, in a way, even cheerfully.

The Misses Lance gave their word that they would not talk, and they asked Father Joseph to luncheon. As it still wanted an hour to that meal, the young men sauntered away to talk together, and Father Joseph went to see Dr. Baulark.

Before the evening came, the good spirits of Frederick Drake were pretty well restored; and Peter Sands himself breathed freely when he found, after three days' time, that the ninety-seven pounds were safely lodged and placed to Mr. Breward's credit in the Treddington bank.

CHAPTER VI.

The ten days that Peter had to live through during Mr. Breward's absence from home were ten days of heart-ache and brain-puzzle.

Drake was so queer that he did not know what to make of him. Mr. Bennet had been displeased at his inattention to his office duties, and had threatened to complain of him to his uncle as soon as he returned. Of course Drake brought all his griefs to Peter. He said he was broken-down, poor, and miserable; that he dreaded the exposure of his folly to his uncle, and yet he longed to have everything known, as the only way to get strength for himself and protection against Gardener. He said he hated Gardener and was afraid of him, and that he should not be surprised at any vengeance that James Gardener might take upon him.

Then also Peter had sorrowful suspicions as to Fred drinking more than was good for him; and, after the experience of one evening at Mr. Breward's house, he had steadily refused to go again, but had made Drake free at any time of his own room, and of his glass bower on the house-top.

So it happened that from morning till night Peter had no time to himself. And when he went to rest he lay awake haunted by thoughts of Drake, and unhappy at speeches that young man had made. All these undisciplined speeches tended towards one idea—that Fred Drake hated James Gardener. The poor young man reckoned up the money he had actually spent; then the money that his uncle might consider to be the honest interest on the borrowed money; then a further sum which probably would be paid as a bonus to James Gardener if he consented to a private arrangement of these money affairs, which were unquestionably disgraceful to Drake, without giving unnecessary trouble. Drake now knew that he would never be admitted into the firm from which he drew his money. He could not be described as the kind of character to do credit to a large business, conducted on honest principles, by a set of thoroughly steady men—he had lost that chance of improving his fortune; and he had greatly diminished the sum of money they had agreed to pay him. Past folly, present pain, and future need, were very unpleasant subjects of meditation to this misguided young man, who acknowledged his wilfulness only with an angry repentance and a vindictive feeling towards James Gardener, which it greatly troubled Peter Sands to see.

However, there was nothing to be done but to bear it; and bear it Peter did as well as he was able. But his life had grown heavy with this trouble weighing on it, and he looked out for something to console himself with.

He visited the poor and needy, comforted the afflicted, and taught the ignorant. Still, wherever he went the thought of Fred Drake haunted him. It was a sad thing to think of Drake's bitter spirit and sore heart; of his angry regret, which was no true repentance, but a vexation of spirit which led to no good result, but often to the terrible indulgence of drinking.

This foolish youth hated the past, which he could never recall, and deadened the regrets of the present moment by taking more wine than was good for him. Most heartily did Peter desire the return of Mr. Breward. In the meantime he had to do the best he could for Fred; and it was a wearing work.

It came naturally to Peter Sands at this time to pray frequently. He had been taught to mark the day with many pious ejaculations, and to give his hours and the work that filled them up to God. But now those holy thoughts came oftener, and many true thanksgivings came also; for he had been strengthened from childhood by the Sacraments, kept safe by good teaching, and, by good guidance, kept in the way of life. He felt very strongly that he had more to be thankful for than other men; and he prayed for a heart of love. "Lord, teach me to love Thee!"

Once, during this weary ten days, after having long listened to Fred Drake's bitter, discontented moanings, Peter took his hat and stick and started on a walk by himself, longing for the refreshment of pure air, eager for exercise, and wanting to be alone with the smiling earth full of the promise of harvest, and the quiet unclouded sky. This was on the afternoon of a sweet, calm day, and he walked with vigor like one rejoicing to be at peace and alone. He returned from this country ramble by a way which brought him into the middle of Treddington, and he found himself close to Mr. Bloomfield's house, occupied by Mrs. Mills as housekeeper. Peter knocked at the door, and his old friend appeared. She greeted him very kindly.

"I was just wanting something to do me good," she said, "and here you are! I could not have been sent anything better."

She took him to her own sitting-room, where everything was in the finest order, and where every moment she expected the arrival of Mr. Bloomfield's daughter Helen. She came before their first greetings and mutual inquiries were over, and she and Peter were very glad to meet. He saw Helen but seldom, for she was as a rule engaged all day, and Peter spent his evenings either at Mr. Breward's or at home.

They talked of old times and present times; and they found that quite enough, without speculations as to the future.

They talked of Mrs. Penwarne and her trusted maid-servant, Mrs. Brading. They spoke of Lady Edith; and Helen could have talked of her all night. Everybody was talked of: Mrs. Beauchamp and good, hard-working Millicent; and of the pleasure it always was to get to the village of Penwarne for a day. Then they talked of the tenants at the mansion; and Mrs. Mills praised them, and said how kind both Mr. and Mrs. Cleverly were to her brother, James Gardener.

"O," said Peter, not wanting to talk of James, "how is Mary, and how is Mrs. Roper? I had not time to go and see the dear old cottage the last time I visited Father Joseph. I hope they go on well."

"They are well enough," said Mrs. Mills. "Next to myself, Mrs. Roper is the best person Mary could be with. She has falls-out with her father. He wants to smarten her up a bit, and she won't listen to it. If she has work enough she is satisfied; and she was born to the wash-tub. Besides, Mary has a wonderful deal of faith. She never had a clever tongue, but she ever had a strong heart; a heart of faith it always was. She never loved talking, but her soul could converse with the saints; ah yes, and with their Divine Master. When she used to be in trouble she would say to me, 'What a mercy it is that God knows—knows without explanations—knows all things! What is the use of much talking? There's my heart; and He knows all things.' Mary had always a heart of faith. She early took God for her friend, and she never doubted nor questioned. But she provoked her father, who never understood her. And he disliked her being of her mother's religion; but I never did. I used to say to him, 'Let the girl alone. There's her and Peter Sands, and they behave themselves always—why should you vex your own child when you never vex Peter?'"

"That is true," said the young man; "I never remember his saying a word against the Catholic faith either to me or before me."

"No; he never did. He dared not, because of the Colonel. And you were a sharp one, and might have answered him. I used to marvel over it often. But Mary has got to bear the storm singly now, and she has had a good deal to bear lately."

"I am sorry," exclaimed Peter. "What has the trouble been about?"

"You know that she and Roper have been long going to be married."

"Yes, I know that."

"It was to have been this month, and it is not to be."

"What, broken off?"

"No; not *broken off*, but *put off*. It is her father's doing, and I don't know the end of it."

After this Peter bade Mrs. Mills good-night, and set off to walk through Treddington to the terrace on which was Miss Lance's house. As he was going on at a steady pace, he saw a face he knew, and stopped. "Why, Roper!" he cried, and stretched out his hand.

"Thank you, sir," said the sailor, with a fine smile spreading all over his face. "I have not seen you for long, and they tell me you are up in the world; climbing the ladder, I hear. I always wished you well, and I am glad to have my wish."

"Many thanks to you," said Peter. "You've had a long absence."

"Nearly five years. And I have to go again. That's bad, sir."

"Were you thinking of a holiday?"

"Yes; and a wife. But the father puts me off; and Mary made a promise about not marrying without her father's consent. Put off for two years. I've no trust in James Gardener, and I never had. He loves nothing but money. He promised Mary fifty pounds to start with; and now he says, with oaths and anger, that he has been robbed, and it will take him two years to put the money together again. Now I'd take her without a penny. The money is nothing to me. But he had often promised Mary, and she wants to keep him to his promise. But, above all, she has promised him to help to make up his loss, and so between them I am to go again to sea, instead of settling down as we had intended. It's a trial; and I disbelieve every word James Gardener says, which makes the trial greater. But there is no turning Mary. She has been a good daughter from her earliest years, and she will stay the same to the last. But that man has dealt falsely with me, and I'll make him understand that I know it."

And so Roper passed on, and Peter's thoughts went back to the ninety-seven pounds that Gardener had been made to refund, and he sighed to think that his old friend Mary had suffered because of it. When a man does wrong there is no knowing how far the evil may reach, or who or how many may be injured by it.

With this reflection Peter reached the door of Miss Lance's house, and just as he got there he saw a man turn suddenly away, and, by the dim evening light, he saw the man disappear round the corner of a house which stood in the angle of the road leading down to the meadows, which lay between the river and the back of Miss Lance's house.

Peter knew the man immediately. Indeed the man made no attempt at concealment. It was James Gardener; and he faced round for a moment and cast on Peter a vile look of hatred, such as it is to be hoped seldom disfigures a human countenance. It made Peter start. But Gardener was gone in a moment, and Peter entered Miss Lance's house, and heard himself called from the drawing-room.

"We are going to try this glee," said Miss Jane. "Come and take your part. It is not difficult. You will sing it at sight."

There, just arrived, stood Drake.

Peter did his best, which Miss Lance pronounced to be really very creditable to him, and he and Drake profited so far by instructions and repetitions as to sing their song very well before the practising was over. The Misses Lance were going to give a little concert soon; they only waited for the return of Mr. and Mrs. Breward. Many of their old pupils resided in the town and neighborhood, and there were to be many meetings and much private practising before the grand rehearsal, which was to precede the full-dressed entertainment of music and dancing which these ladies were preparing for their friends.

The assizes were to occur before long. Miss Lance called it quite a time of rejoicing, because no case of importance would have to be tried. They thought of fixing their party a day or two after this event, before a barrister of their acquaintance, a Mr. Monitor, would have to return to London. This gentleman had long been known and admired at Treddington. With the Misses Lance he was a friend and a hero. They had educated two of Mr. Monitor's nieces, and they were now rejoicing over the probable presence of this gentleman at their musical party. They called it a musical party; they said the dancing would not be much, just "a hop" after the supper; and the supper dwelt as much in Miss Lance's mind as the music did in her sister's.

On the night, however, of which we have been speaking, after the practising, and the cake and wine duly brought out for the young men's reward and refreshment, Peter said to Fred:

"I saw Gardener near the house as I came in. Had you been having an interview with him?"

"No," Fred answered hurriedly. "I hope I may never see him again. I could kill him!" He uttered the last words in a peculiarly vindictive manner, hissing them forth under his breath.

Peter said no more, and he did not ask Drake to come to his room and smoke as he sometimes did, though he was not a smoker himself. He let him go home, and only said, "Go to bed, and get a good night's rest. You really want it."

Fred answered, "Yes, I do," and shook hands cordially and went out quietly enough.

The days following passed without any event worth recording. As has been said the money was paid into the bank to Mr. Breward's account, and, except that Frederick Drake was in bed one day with a violent headache, all things went on easily till the night before the day fixed for Mr. Breward's return.

On that night Peter met Mary Gardener at dusk in the street, and she stopped him, saying,

"Do you know where my father is?"

"No," said Peter; "I have not seen him for about a week."

"Have you seen Roper?"

"I saw him last on the very night when I last saw your father."

"I am here to get hold of him. He and father must not meet. There's a trouble between them. For the first time in my life I shall be glad to get him off to sea."

"It's money, of course?"

"O yes; it is money, it has always been money; money makes more mischief than all that's in the world besides."

"Not money, but the love of money," said Peter.

Then Mary laughed.

Peter did not choose to ask Mary what the particulars were of this quarrel between Roper and her father; she went on, saying she should look in at a public-house—a house which bore a tolerably good character—where she thought she might find her father. "Mr. Bloomfield knows about it," said Mary, "and he has told me to bring him there."

Peter continued his walk, and then went home.

The next day brought back Mr. Breward. No sincerer welcome ever met any man. He was well, and Mrs. Breward was happy as she could be without her little girls. But they had seemed quite contented to stay in their school at Boulogne, and Mrs. Breward was satisfied.

The day of their return was all talk and rejoicing and welcomes; the next day was business. As had been arranged be-

CHAPTER VII.

Peter took his part in the song pointed out by Miss Jane Lance, just giving a smile to Frederick Drake, whom he had seen already that day.

tween the young men, Father Joseph was to call on Mr. Breward, and in his presence the story of the money and of Fred's folly was to be truly told. And exactly as it had been planned, so it was done.

Peter began his story from the moment when Mr. Breward gave him from the window of the railway-carriage, the memorandum about the ninety-seven pounds. Then he turned to Fred, and said:

"Tell your own story for yourself."

Fred looked pale and miserable. He trembled in every limb.

"Yes; tell it yourself," said Mr. Breward, in a kind encouraging tone. "It will be all the better for you. You will have a manly satisfaction in getting it off your mind. No one here is going to do anything but make a thanksgiving for the stop that has been put to that course of imprudence into which you had been tempted. Let me hear it all from yourself."

But Fred *could* not, or *would* not, do as his friends wished him to do.

"It is hard, it is so difficult, to accuse oneself. It is next to impossible to say by what steps one went, when every step was ruinous."

"Well, so far that is good; you have made an honest admission," said Mr. Breward.

He still spoke in an encouraging sort of way, and not at all like the angry guardian of an unworthy youth. He was treating Fred like a man; and Father Joseph was there with approval in his heart; and Peter sat nervous and unhappy, because his friend, for whom he suffered, could not find courage to throw off the chains of self-love, and speak the plain words of one who desired truth, and only the truth, even though the truth must be against himself. But Frederick Drake had no such moral strength as his friends desired to see.

"I must know everything. I must be told all the particulars," said Mr. Breward, "or I can't act. I have got to settle all your affairs for you. I want to make for you the best bargain I can consistently with honor, so I must learn every circumstance. Tell me yourself, Fred. There need be no concealment between you and me."

But Fred Drake was the slave of self-love, and he could not tell his own story for himself and against himself. What seemed so easy to Peter was too great a thing for Fred to do.

Peter, who so often, as a good Catholic, in the Sacrament of Penance, had laid bare his heart with Christian simplicity in a good confession, would have had no difficulty in telling everything he had done, and why and how he had so done, to a man like Mr. Breward, who had a right to know, and whose wish was to help and to rescue; but it was not so with Fred. He could not overcome his self-love any further than to say to his uncle:

"Peter knows it all, sir. He has got it all out of me. He has seen everything. He has made out the accounts, and got all written down. I know I have been a fool. He will tell it all. He knows how to do it, and I don't."

Then, without any more words, Peter began to speak. He turned to the table, and placed some papers before him, to which he referred occasionally; and he told the whole story, from the first time when Fred took to gambling to the last, when he consented to a theft.

He spoke steadily, keeping all emotion out of his voice, and all blame or judgment of any sort out of his manner; just as if he had been a mere machine used by Fred, and never as if he were speaking on his own account, did Peter now tell the whole tale from first to last, and lay before Mr. Breward the calculations which showed the exact state of Fred Drake's affairs.

When he had finished, Mr. Breward said, "Thank you." Two very common words, certainly; but there was something in his voice and manner which said that Peter had done him a great service, and deserved his gratitude.

Fred jumped up from his seat, and gave a loud sigh, like a groan, clasping his hands above his head.

"Very well. We must place this in the right hands, and get it all settled forthwith," Mr. Breward said this in a tone of great

determination. "We can't do our own work here, Fred. You must not have a word of any kind with this man Gardener. He shall be dealt with as well as justice can allow, and he shall have more than he ought to have. He can't be a very old offender in this line, we know. All shall be done by some one on whom we can rely, and you may be no worse in the end for this disagreeable experience. Now let us shake hands." He held his nephew by both hands for a moment and looked him in the face. "No man ever had safer friends than you have had; and your worst—nay, your only—enemy is yourself."

Fred looked relieved, and smiled.

"You give me a bad character, sir," he said; "but not worse than I deserve."

But after this Mr. Breward only said,

"Remember what I have commanded about Gardener. You must not exchange another word with him; and you, Peter, if you should see him and he offers to talk to you, say that you are pledged not to say a word on this subject. Not one word. You know nothing. I am not going to tell you what will have to be done. You are in ignorance, and you are pledged not to hold any conversation on the matter."

Both the young men agreed to this. And so ended Mr. Breward's welcome home.

CHAPTER VIII.

When Peter Sands rose up from his night's sleep, the day after the interview recorded in the last chapter, he felt as any one might be supposed to feel who had been with a friend while he had undergone a painful operation, and suffered by sympathy with him.

He had really suffered while giving, in Fred's presence, the full account, as far as he knew, of all his follies and misdoings. But he had suffered more afterwards. Under the excitement of the moment he had found words to express exactly all he had to tell, but after the excitement had passed he wondered that he had been able to do it. It was like making a man's confession for him. He rose early, not much rested by his sleep, and feeling weary and feverish. He went out earlier than usual, and took his way straight to the Catholic church.

It was before the hour for the usual daily Mass. He had known that it was too early; he had gone there for a quiet holy hour and to pray. Presently he saw a strange priest come in and kneel down. He had entered the church by the door of the sacristy. After a short time this priest returned to the sacristy, and Peter was again alone in the church.

He was saying the rosary, and using the rosary that had been given him by Colonel Penwarne on the hill, on the morning of the Colonel's death. Before using these beads, Peter had always made the custom of saying the prayers for the dead, and had said these prayers on that morning.

Just as he had finished his rosary the strange priest came back and looked towards him. Peter got up and went to the sacristy.

"Are you Peter Sands?" asked the priest. "If you are, you will serve my Mass."

Peter immediately prepared the altar, got the priest his vestments, and served Mass. There was not, through the whole Mass, any other person in church.

When Mass was over, Peter returned to his place, made a thanksgiving and left the church.

He walked towards the docks; walked farther than he usually walked when he went out before breakfast, and so returned in a hurry and rather overheated to Miss Lance's house. As he was going quickly through the streets he met James Gardener, who stopped, and, in an angry authoritative voice, said he wanted to speak to him.

"Stop," said James; "stop, when I tell you."

But Peter passed quickly, saying, "Not now, not now." And with a sense of relief he found himself inside the house-door,

where a fragrant scent of coffee filled the pretty little hall, and Miss Jane's kind voice said :

"You are so hot ! You should not have walked so fast. You know we should not have minded your being late. It is not good for you to be so hot before breakfast."

Peter made no answer to this. He talked of other things, and tried to eat his breakfast as if nothing had happened ; but in his heart he was sorry that he had met James Gardener.

After breakfast he went to his work as usual ; he came back to luncheon, saying he had to go to Stonemoor for Mr. Breward in the afternoon. The pony, ready to be mounted, was brought to the door by Mr. Breward's stableman, and Peter rode away.

"He is not quite like himself to-day," said Miss Lance to her sister.

The reader knows that they were very fond of Peter.

Miss Jane replied that the idea of his being a little overwrought had occurred to her, and that she had heard that Fred Drake had again given him trouble, but she knew no particulars ; their own servants had heard something from Mr. Breward's servants, and they had just mentioned the fact to her.

"Fred ought to profit by Peter's example," said Miss Lance gravely.

"And so he may, poor youth," exclaimed Miss Jane. "Good example is powerful always ; and Peter is so steady."

The ladies went to their different occupations, and thought no more of Peter, who was riding through pleasant lanes to the open country which led to the works at Stonemoor. When he got there, there was an honest welcome ready, for Peter was greatly beloved by the men. Before he left them to return to Mr. Breward, two of the men, who had known him long and were accustomed to call him their "young master," and who also loved and admired him—these men, in the hearing of four or five other men, and evidently with the consent of all, surprised Peter greatly by cautioning him against James Gardener.

Peter stopped them quickly.

"Why, he was as good as a father to me," he said, "when I could not take care of myself."

"That may have been easily enough," said a man called Simon Lyster. "James Gardener could always work where the pay was sure and more than sufficient. But something has happened. He has been carrying on his courses a little too openly, and flying at too high game. There has been a great commotion at the mansion. He has, it is said, been drawing one of their men-servants into betting and bad company, and set him on making dishonest speculations. It has reached Mr. Cleverly's ears, and he has told Gardener that he will have to go. The man had had a legacy, and as he had been in the family from childhood he had saved money. He has nothing left now, and it is said that Gardener has grown rich on the spoils of many such foolish people, and Mr. Cleverly is intending to punish him. He came here this morning, expecting to see either Mr. Breward or you. His idea is that you have discovered things to his disadvantage. We gathered this from his threats and conversation. He can't be far off now. He is half mad with anger. Go home by the public road and not by the riverside, as you do sometimes. It is bad to face a man in James Gardener's humor, unless you are every way more than a match for him."

"I know nothing of any evil conduct of his towards Mr. Cleverly or any of his household," said Peter steadily. "I am obliged to return by the public road, because to-day I have no time for a ride for pleasure. I have to keep an appointment at five o'clock ; and I should be very sorry, even if I were more than a match for James Gardener, to lift my hand against him. He has, in fact, no cause for any ill-will to me."

"Well, then, good-day," said the man ; "but don't scorn advice ; keep away from James for the present."

"Thank you. I'll remember what you have said. Thank you many times ;" and Peter rode away. He did not meet either man, woman, or child on his road back to Treddington, and he left his pony at Mr. Breward's stables and went into

the house to conclude his business with his master. After that they talked together for a few minutes, and Mr. Breward said some kind things to him.

Then he said, "I had my first interview with Gardener to-day. We came to no conclusion. What was said was only to open the matter. I let him know that I was aware of all that had passed, and that I intended to bring all matters between him and Frederick Drake to an immediate conclusion. He was surprised. I would not let him talk. I was peremptory. I said, 'I give you a short time to think things over. I don't want to be unjust nor even unkind ; though you deserve severity, you will not get it from me.' When he wanted to say more, I told him I had not yet made up my mind as to what I should say to him. I said that I should take advice ; and then I made him go, or rather I parted from him by going myself. I shall now consult Mr. Bennet."

While Mr. Breward was saying this, Peter was thinking whether or not he should repeat what the man at Stonemoor had said to him. And he decided that he would not speak of it. There were several reasons, not any of them of great weight, which made him decide on silence.

Peter did not go every Saturday to Stonemoor ; Mr. Breward went himself very often. But on this day Peter had gone, and gone earlier than usual, and he had been detained there a little on account of his conversation with the men. All that had been said came to his mind strongly, but he determined not to tell Mr. Breward. It was now after four o'clock in the afternoon. He had to keep his five o'clock appointment with the choir-singers, who depended on his punctuality. He disliked throwing stones at a fallen man, and it was no business of his to talk of anything that had occurred at the mansion. He shrank from saying that he had been cautioned not to encounter James ; he felt that it would be making a sort of hero of himself if he repeated all the men had said ; and certainly, as it was all gossip and had nothing to do with Drake's affairs, there was no necessity for his repeating what had passed at Stonemoor. It ended, therefore, by his determining on silence, and his going off to the choir-practising in the Catholic school-room, which occupied him till nearly eight o'clock, when Dr. Beauchlerk asked him to come and take supper with him.

It was always a great treat to Peter to do this. Dr. Beauchlerk was full of learning, and had the pleasantest possible way of imparting knowledge. In Peter this good and learned man had an intelligent listener, and their conversation together often got animated with the most agreeable liveliness ; often also overflowing with wisdom of the highest kind.

This evening, Peter, who was a modest-minded man, a stranger being present, spoke very little, but he heard much that interested him ; and, not feeling it right to remain longer than seemed to be necessary, he left Dr. Beauchlerk early, and, making a bow to the stranger, he was leaving the room, when this stranger stopped him.

"I shall see Mrs. Penwarne to-morrow," he said ; "she will be glad to know we have met. She has often spoken of you. I remember you when I came to Penwarne, after the Colonel's death. We shall meet again one day, and then we can improve our acquaintance."

Peter's face was flushed with pleasure.

"O sir," he said, "I owe everything to the Penwarne family ; to cease to be grateful to Mrs. Penwarne, and, indeed, to Lady Edith also, would be impossible. I owe everything to their goodness."

"If to them you owe your Catholic teaching, you do indeed owe them everything. I am related to Lady Edith ; our fathers were cousins. I am a religious—a Benedictine—and you can call me Father Dunstan. Good-bye ! I shall be glad to meet you again."

At this moment the clock that stood on the stairs, and which struck the quarters, gave out a quarter to nine, and Peter, saying he should just have time to get back by nine o'clock, went away.

He walked a short distance in the direction of Miss Lance's

house, and passed Roper in the street. The man touched his cap, and said "Good-night!" Neither of them stopped. But when Peter had gone a few steps further he remembered that he had promised, a few days before, to get a garden-tool for Miss Jane Lance. She had broken the cutter with which she trimmed her grass edgings: the handle was still quite sound, and she had asked Peter to get her a new iron cutter in place of the broken one. This he had promised to do, saying he could fasten the handle in for her himself.

The events of the last few days had driven this little commission from his memory, but now that it had suddenly come to his recollection he resolved to turn back, late as it was, and get it.

This he did. It was Saturday night, and he knew the shop would be open. He bought the cutter. Several workmen were there, overlooking some tools. There were some large clasp-knives on the counter of a superior sort. They took Peter's fancy and he bought one, putting it into his pocket without having it wrapped up.

The garden at the back of Miss Lance's house opened into a road, and on the other side of this road were the sloping fields the Long Meadows, which skirted the river.

It was now a quicker way home for Peter to get down by some back lanes into the meadow-walk by the river, and then to cross up the road and get to Miss Lance's house by the back garden, than to go by the streets and enter by the door at the front of the house; so Peter ran down the lane at the side of the shop, and was soon in sight of the Long Meadows stile.

It was not moonlight, and the sky was cloudy; here, near the river, a mist was rolling up, and you could not see to any very great distance before you. But the way was familiar to Peter. All the year round the river-path by the Long Meadows was known to him—sometimes fishing, sometimes trying his skill at sketching, sometimes in spring getting fritillaries for Miss Lance, who greatly delighted in these beautiful wild flowers. Then this path led also to the cricket-ground, and two miles of hard walking by the river's bank took you up to the uncultivated land, across which there was a path to Stonemoor. Peter knew every step of his way quite well, and he walked on through the mist, which gathered thick sometimes, and then rolled away till he could see every thing around him plainly enough.

It had rolled away when he got to the stile.

The stile was made of granite posts and cross-pieces. As Peter placed his hand on the top stone, to throw himself across and drop to the other side, he thought, "How slippery the fog has made the stone!"

As he dropped on the other side his foot slipped and he fell; he just saved himself from really lying prostrate by his right hand, which touched the mud. But he was active enough to save himself in this way; and he stood safe and upright, only rather astonished at the accident, in a shorter period of time than it will have taken the reader to arrive at this account of his safety.

He recovered himself in a moment, and only his right hand reached the ground.

On he went for a short distance through the meadow; then he turned across the turf on his left hand, and so reached the gate which opened on the road nearly opposite the garden-door.

The door was not locked. His right hand felt painful, so he opened it with his left. This made more noise than usual, on account of his being awkward with the latch. Hannah, the servant, ran out.

"O, is it you?" she said. "I thought some one was playing tricks with the door."

"I opened it with my left hand," said Peter, and he walked into the house.

Miss Lance was in the kitchen, giving some directions as to the next day's housekeeping.

She spoke to Peter. He stood there answering her, when Hannah walked in, having locked the garden-door for the night.

"You have hurt yourself," said the woman. "Why, Mr. Sands, what is the matter?"

Peter looked pale; the wristband of his shirt was spotted with blood and dirt.

"I fell as I got over the Long Meadows stile; or I should have fallen if I had not recovered myself by pitching on my hand. But I did not know I had cut it. I haven't cut it. I'll go to my room. No, Miss Lance, don't touch me." Peter was pale and troubled, because the thought came back to him of the top stone of the stile feeling strangely. What could it have been? "Don't touch me; I'll go and wash. Give me the kettle, Hannah."

"I'll bring the kettle," said the woman. "I am always careful as to falls. I'll carry it. There! Go first up-stairs."

When Peter and Hannah entered the room, which has been described—the long, narrow room with the bed at one end, and the other end fitted up as a sitting-room—Peter said:

"I feel queer. I must have given myself a shake. Help me off with my coat."

Hannah performed this service, and then said;

"Shall I take the things out of your pockets?"

He said, "Yes;" adding, "I bought a new knife, and when I fell over the stile it dropped out of my breast-pocket. You may think what a jerk I had. I picked it up and put it back. It will want wiping, for the ground was wet with the mist as well as slippery."

"Here it is," said Hannah. "But it has not a mark on it. This knife has never touched the ground!"

"But I picked it up. The light glittered on the new steel at the back of the handle, or I should never have seen it at all."

"Ay!" exclaimed Hannah; "but here is another;" and she threw it from her into the basin she had just filled with water.

Those two looked in each other's faces.

"God grant thou hast done no wrong this day," said Hannah.

As she spoke there was a loud sound of voices in the street, just below the windows.

Hannah opened the window and called out:

"What is the matter? Don't stand gossiping—a parcel of lads and men should know better—just under our windows with your noise."

Hannah was a well-known personage, and no unruly play or grouping of persons for gossip and laughter was allowed opposite Miss Lance's house. But now some one looked up and said:

"It's a bad job, missis. James Gardener lies dead by the Long Meadow stile, and it is thought that some one has been hard upon him."

"Dead!"

"Yes, dead. Has been dead about half an hour; not more, 'tis fancied."

"What is doing with him?"

"He's carried to the shed by the station. Simon Lyster, going back to the meadows with his dog, found him—that is, the dog found him and gave a piteous howl; so Simon began to search, and there he lay."

"In the path?"

"Just out of it; by the ditch that runs down to the river by the side of the hedge."

"Come the first thing to-morrow, and tell us what is known," said Hannah.

She shut the window in a hurry, for Peter had given a groan and fallen back on the bed in a fainting fit.

Speechlessly and with a horrible feeling overpowering her—a nameless feeling, for she did not know why she suffered—she recovered Peter, and said:

"Now get to bed, and get there quickly. There is more water in the kettle. I am coming back in a short time; I've got to tell the ladies. But do you obey me; wash, and get to bed."

She left the room; and Peter, after cleansing his stained hand with plentiful ablutions, obeyed her as a child would have done. He was so troubled that he was glad to obey and not to think.

PART III.

CHAPTER I.

Now in her heart, Hannah believed that Peter Sands had met James Gardener, and that, under provocation, in a moment of fiery passion, he had struck the man a deadly blow, and become his murderer.

But Hannah was still Peter's true friend.

It was no business of hers to give utterance to any suspicion. It was clearly her business to speak only to facts, and not to say more about them than the truth demanded. She left him in his room, and went down stairs to the drawing room, where the Miss Lances were sitting.

"Ladies, did you hear the talking in the street? I opened the window to disperse the gossipers, and they went; but they told me this—James Gardener's dead body has been found by the Long Meadows stile, just by the side of the ditch."

"I thought Peter came home that way," said Miss Lance.

"So he did. And you, ma'am, heard what he said."

"What is the meaning of it? What are you looking so oddly for?"

It was Miss Jane who said this, and indeed it was enough to alarm any one to see the strange expression on her sister's face, and the unusual look of anxious determination on Hannah's.

"Please, Miss Jane, don't be nervous. It only means that we are in the middle of very awful facts."

"Yes. You have said well, Hannah. Now, sister, just listen to what we say. Of course, Peter will be had up as a witness. Then we may be called on to speak as to what passed when he came into the house."

"I never heard him come in," said Miss Jane.

"That was because he came in by the back door," said Miss Lance. "All the interest lies in the fact that he did *not* come by the usual way through the streets to the front of the house, but he came by the Long Meadows, and he fell as he got over the stile, and saved himself by coming down on his right hand with such force as to hurt his wrist. The fog, he said, was so dense at one moment, though it rolled away the next, that he did not make his footing sure, and he found the stile and all about it slippery. Then, when he got to the garden door, he tried to open it with his left hand, because his right wrist was paining him, and the awkwardness of the attempt was heard by Hannah, who went out and met him. I stayed in the kitchen, and when he came in I thought he looked pale; he had mud on his sleeve. Hannah returned from locking the door. She said to Peter, 'You have hurt yourself.' Then he told us of his fall. But he said he could not account for blood on his hand and sleeve. He did not know that he had cut his hand, or any way broken the skin. He said he would go and wash, and was going to carry a kettle of hot water up-stairs for himself, but Hannah would not let him. She went up after him. Now, Hannah, what happened next?"

Then Hannah told all that has been just said as to the knife. How that Peter had desired her to take the knife from his pocket for him, as his wrist was stiff: how he had thought that it would be dirty from the mire into which he said he had jerked it by the fall; how the knife was perfectly bright and clean, and how she had found a second knife just like the one he had bought that evening, and how this second knife was soiled in a way too terrible to think of, and how she had dropped it into the basin of hot water that was just before her.

Then came the account of the voices below the window, and of her inquiries, and the answer that had come, on which Peter had fainted—fainted for the first time in his life.

She told, too, how she had recovered him, and left him to go into bed, while she had come down to tell, as she had now done, the whole story to Miss Lance and her sister.

Still in her heart Hannah believed that Peter had killed James Gardener.

Not, as she said in her heart, not like a murderer—not of premeditated malice, but in some angry moment, by the force of a blow, directed by chance to some dangerous part—a blow to which that man must have provoked him.

This was just what the good woman felt, and the way in which she argued. And she knew that, in Mr. Breward's absence, Peter had trouble with Frederick Drake. She knew that Gardener had visited Drake, that they had come to high words, and that in some way Gardener had gone off triumphant, and left Drake in angry despair, so vexed, so self-blaming, so wretched about something which he vowed he could not help, that he had called for wine, and, in spite of the servant's remonstrance, had taken much more than was good for him.

Hannah knew this. And she knew that Peter had been sent for to keep Drake quiet and bring him back to his senses. It was well known in the house—and, indeed, no one had tried to conceal it—that Peter had been Drake's faithful friend, and a very firm friend, too; that he had issued orders to Drake, and that he had been obeyed; that he had commanded Drake to have no further dealings with Gardener, and that Drake had told the servants to refuse Gardener admittance; that Gardener had forced himself into the house on one occasion, and that he had to be turned out, Drake having taken refuge in his room and locked his door.

Of these details of what had happened in Mr. Breward's house in his absence she knew more than Peter knew, so she had ground for her fears, and her fears were so strong as to make her believe that Peter had, under some strong provocation, or perhaps in consequence of personal violence, killed James Gardener that night at the Long Meadows stile.

Or, perhaps, he had not known that he had killed him; he might have left him knocked down and disabled, and, perhaps, the first knowledge of his being actually dead had reached him through the voices in the street, and so sent him fainting on the bed.

So Hannah argued; and so she really believed. But she was never going to put her belief into words. She would be Peter's friend to the last.

Miss Jane Lance had listened with a frightened face to all her sister had said: and to Hannah's continuation of the narrative both sisters had given a perfect attention.

Miss Lance did not speak; but Miss Jane, in a trembling, hurried manner, with a poorly acted appearance of indifference, said,

"Well, it is very disagreeable. But all we know is that the man is dead—died in a fit, perhaps, or from an accident; what can it be to us?"

"No, no, sister," said the elder lady, very gently. "Do not let us pretend to an indifference which we cannot feel. People are sure to fear that Gardener has been killed. It is for the public safety that every suspicious thing of this nature should be inquired into. It is plain that Peter must have been on the spot immediately after the—the—perhaps the murder. Plain speaking is best, I think. Evidences of foul play—or what has the appearance of foul play—have come into this house with him. He will be a witness, and called on to give evidence of what befell him, of what he felt or saw; Hannah too, possibly: I may myself be called on, for I was one of the first to see him on his entering this house after coming straight from the place of the murder. Very disagreeable things have come into this house to-night. We have nothing to conceal. But we must not try to appear indifferent."

"O, I am not indifferent," said Miss Jane; and, leaning back in her chair, she burst into tears.

With a sickening intensity she knew that Peter would be suspected. He *must* be looked on as a suspected person; and suspected of what? Of murdering a man who had taken care of his childhood; whom he had once, in his innocent infancy, loved as a son loves his father. How could any one bear to have Peter Sands suspected of such a deed as that?

To be suspected of *that*! Could any man, however good he might be, ever recover such a blow as even a suspicion of this nature must be?"

Peter, in her mind, was already separated from all good men, by being the object of a vile suspicion. And he so young: all his friends happy in his promising youth.

Was all this youthful promise to be blighted by a suspicion such as that which she was sure would now be entertained? She dropped back into the depths of the great chair in which she was sitting. O, if he had only died! Death would have been nothing to this!

While one sister was thus disabled and dismayed, the other, casting her fears aside, as it were, was vigorous to think and act.

"Where is Hester?" she asked.

Hester was the house and parlor maid, and Hannah was the cook.

"A merciful Providence made me send her early to bed," answered Hannah, with unaffected solemnity. "The girl had had a headache. I sent her up-stairs just before I went to the garden door. Her attic being at the back, she has neither heard nor seen anything."

"That is well; now we can take counsel together. Hannah, I shall let you out at the front door; knock gently to be let in again. I do not want Peter to hear you. Go to Mr. Breward; say only this—that he must come to me. Peter Sands has sprained his wrist, and he has something to say about the Long Meadows stile. Bring him back with you."

So Hannah went away, the door being carefully shut, and making no noise. Then Miss Lance went up-stairs, and knocked at Peter's door.

"Oh, come in. Is it you, Miss Lance? I was sure some one would come directly. Hannah promised to return."

"You fainted; but you look hot now."

"I am very hot. Is it not dreadful? Is the knife still in that basin of water?"

"Yes. I see a large unopened clasp-knife there."

"It ought to be all told," said Peter, as he sat up in bed, with his eyes bright and his face flushed. "And I believe that I have hurt my wrist. You know that that is not *my* knife. My knife is on the table. I picked up the other from the ground after I fell. I saw it by the light striking on the steel at the back, and I never doubted its having jerked out of my pocket. O dear, what a sad and horrible thing this is! Poor James! and I am so disabled. How I wish I was not in this fever with my wrist! I'll have a surgeon to look at it. I never was ill in my life, that I can recollect. Look at it, Miss Lance. But all this while we ought to be telling everything we know. I wonder what o'clock it is."

Miss Lance quieted Peter by looking at his wrist. It was certainly very seriously hurt.

"Indeed we *must* send for help," she said, "I will send for Mr. Carter."

"But I ought to speak about the knife and my fall and the stile. It is all evidence, you know."

Peter leaned back his head, exhausted by the feverish anxiety of his mind, which with the pain he was suffering, bewildered him.

"I have already sent for Mr. Breward."

"O, thank you. I am very glad."

"Keep quite quiet. I shall return very soon."

"What a trouble for you!" said Peter.

The words followed Miss Lance as she left the room.

She went down to the hall and opened the house-door. She had heard some one come, and she expected to see Hannah; but it was Mr. Breward, and he was there alone. He explained this by the first words he said:

"Hannah spoke of his wrist, so I sent her to bring Carter. Is he really hurt?"

"I think so. But we want to speak of James Gardener. Come here."

She showed Mr. Breward into the room where her sister sat, and told him very quickly all their story. Her concluding

words were these:

"It is just so much that we should do wrong to conceal it; and it is at the same so little that it seems useless to speak."

"Exactly," said Mr. Breward, with a grave face. "Yes, I'll go and see him. I know my way. Stay here, and bring Carter up when he comes."

So Mr. Breward went alone to Peter Sands, and once more the events of the evening were told.

CHAPTER II.

"Peter," said Mr. Breward, after hearing the whole story, "is this all you have to say—all?"

"All. Of course I was surprised to find my cuff, sleeve, and hand soiled, as you know. I have never asked about my shoes; and the knife just stays where Hannah dropped it, in a fit of disgust or fright. I remember she said something of a wrong having been done, and I stared, terrified, puzzled—I can't tell how I felt. I was in great pain; my head began to swim. Then came the voices, and we heard that James had been found by the stile; and I knew he must have been close by when I got over it; and that the soils were—well, I knew. And I fell down faint."

"I hear Carter. He is coming up-stairs. Peter, I think we should send for the superintendent of police. These things you have told me are evidence; but whether of any use we can't tell. We must send, I think. You would *not* prefer secrecy?"

"No, no. Let there be no secrets," gasped Peter. The pain in his wrist at that moment quite took his breath away. Mr. Breward observed the change, and saw the effort that accompanied the words. He could not tell what to make of it.

Mr. Carter entered the room, and went to work immediately on Peter's wrist.

"We must have hot vinegar and bran poultices now," he said. "It is a bad sprain."

So for a time all attention was given to the injured wrist, and Mr. Breward sat down-stairs with Miss Jane. He had said to her that he must go to the superintendent of police, and send him to hear Peter's story.

"They will think that he did it," she said.

It made Mr. Breward start to hear this plain statement.

Poor Miss Jane, whose mind had been occupied for the last hour with this possibility, felt relieved when she had uttered the words. It seemed to lessen her dread. She felt that she shared her grief with a strong man, and that she had got rid of a painful responsibility by speaking these words.

"Yes, it is true," she went on; "they will say that he did it. But I know it must be gone through. I know the man must come. I know Peter Sands must suffer the suspicion, and the degradation that such a suspicion must inevitably bring with it. O, yes, I know it all; and I don't dispute a word you say. But to see a good youth ruined for life in this way, to know that he will live with the disgrace of having been suspected of a murder fastened upon him, is too much for me to bear quietly. And now, if the man is to come, send for him, and make haste; anything is better than waiting with one's heart full of fear and vexation. Never mind about night or day. Of course the police are not going to bed, with a dead man at the station, and the evidences of a possible murder at the Long Meadows stile. Send or go to him directly. I could never sleep with this misery on my mind. And if you would send for him, or bring him, there would be something done, and one might get rest and strength for whatever is to come to-morrow."

And then Miss Jane hid her face in her handkerchief, and smothered her sobs.

"I believe you are right," said Mr. Breward.

He took his hat from the table and left the room. In another moment Miss Jane heard the sound of the closing of the house-door.

While this was going on in the sitting-room, Miss Lance and Hannah were with Mr. Carter in Peter's room.

The surgeon did his work skilfully and kindly. He felt Peter's pulse, and gave a glance at Miss Lance.

"You have some one here whom you can send to my house for a draught, which our young friend will be all the better for taking," he said. "If you have no messenger I will come back, or send some one myself."

"I can go, sir," said Hannah. "Miss Lance won't mind being left; and if anything unexpected occurs the other servant can be called up. You must wash your hands, sir. No, not there, if you please." And Hannah threw a towel over the basin where the clasp-knife still lay in the stained water. "Into this room, sir."

So Mr. Carter followed Hannah, and made his hands clean from the vinegar, and went down-stairs and out of the house without knowing any of the particular circumstances that had attended Peter's fall.

When he was in the hall he said to Hannah,

"Don't let Sands be excited by anything. He has had a shock. If he has not heard of this poor James Gardener's murder, don't tell him till I have seen him again."

"Murder, sir?"

"Yes. Have you not heard?"

"We heard of his death; found by the stile, we heard."

"I am afraid that I have not used a wrong word," said Mr. Carter. "I wish it may be found that I have. Good-night."

"I shall be after you in a minute, sir, for the medicine."

"O, yes. I will go back and prepare it immediately."

Hannah stood still, considering many things; then she walked into the sitting-room to see Miss Jane, and there she found Mr. Breward, who had returned, and a person whom she knew well by sight—the superintendent of police.

"We were waiting for Mr. Carter to leave the house," said Mr. Breward. "We can go up-stairs now."

"He is not to be excited, sir. I am to follow Mr. Carter for some medicine. He found him rather—"

Then Hannah felt that the superintendent's eye was on her, and she also felt that she had done wrong in admitting that Peter's state was one of excitement and agitation.

Perhaps Mr. Breward also had some such thought in his mind, for he said,

"Peter Sands himself sent for Mr. Marston; and if you are to fetch medicine you had better go at once."

Then he led the way up-stairs, and Mr. Marston followed him.

It was no more than just eleven o'clock. It will be remembered that at a quarter before nine Peter had left Dr. Beauchler's house, and all that had been related had happened in rather less than two hours. It must have been not more than a quarter after nine when Peter fell at the stile; in about ten minutes after that Simon Lyster must have found James Gardener's body; and by half-past nine Peter might have got to Miss Lance's house. It was a little after ten when the voices were heard under the window, and now, as Mr. Marston went up-stairs, the clock had just struck eleven.

The superintendent and the most sagacious of his staff had been quietly making observations and collecting evidence for about an hour and a half. It was wonderful how much they had learnt in that time. However, it was not Mr. Marston's part to gossip. He was ready to hear anything, but he had next to nothing to say.

When he entered Peter's room he found him sitting up in bed, carefully propped against a pile of pillows, with his wrist and shoulder enveloped in many wrappings, and finally in a blanket. He smiled as the superintendent came into the room; but the smile was a sad one.

"I am sorry not to have been able to come to you," said Peter; "but for the moment I am disabled."

"You sent for me," said Mr. Marston.

"Yes. I want to tell you all I know."

Then the tears came into Peter's eyes, and his voice was

"You must forgive me," he said. "He was once like a father. His house was my home."

"Yes, I know," said Mr. Marston.

He spoke in a firm sort of way, as if he wished to check all expression of feeling as being against the transaction of business, but not at all as one who could not understand feeling. It was evident, however, at this moment that the superintendent of police considered all mere feeling out of place. His "Yes, I know," stopped Peter at once; with an effort he recovered himself, and in a moment was nearly as calm as Mr. Marston himself.

"Tell me just what you want to tell me; you sent for me to say something. You are to understand that we are seeking for facts that may guide us towards the discovery of the person who caused the man's death. It was not an accident, you understand. His death was caused by a blow. Now everything you say may be used in evidence; so I caution you. I shall not ask you a single question, but I shall take down what you say, and use it if desirable."

"I wish to tell you everything. I wish to put you in possession of all that has occurred to me."

Then Peter began with the clock striking a quarter to nine on his leaving Dr. Beauchler's, and his intending to come home by the direct way through the streets, saying that he changed his mind going to the ironmonger's to order a garden-tool; that when there he found a good many people in the shop, but was nevertheless quickly served; that, as he was leaving, his eye was attracted by a quantity of knives on the counter, lying on an open sheet of coarse brown paper; that he bought one of these knives, and put it in his pocket, refusing to have it wrapped up.

He told how, on leaving the shop, the thought crossed his mind that he would get back by the meadows; and he told the way he took, and how he found the white mist curling up from the river, and how he came on at a good pace till he reached the stile.

Then he entered as minutely as possible into the circumstances of the fall, and of his picking up the knife, thinking it was his own. After this he spoke of his walk home, of his coming into the light of Miss Lance's kitchen, of the mud and stains being found upon him, of his getting up-stairs followed by Hannah with the kettle, of his cautioning her to take his knife out of his pocket—two knives being found, and of the soiled knife being then in the basin of water into which Hannah had dropped it.

The superintendent walked to the basin.

He called Mr. Breward. They pointed out something to each other.

"We must take possession of this," he said; and then returning to Peter, he looked at him.

"That is the whole story," said Peter Sands. "There may be mud on my boots—"

"Hannah has cleaned them," said Mr. Breward. "I asked her. She said your walking through the meadow, up the slope to the gate, had thoroughly wetted them. They were wet with the moisture on the grass; and having a moment's leisure, she cleaned them."

"Well, that is all, then," said Mr. Marston. "I hope your wrist will be pretty well to-morrow."

"It is better already for Mr. Carter's treatment."

"Good-night, then." And both Mr. Marston and Mr. Breward left the room.

Soon after Hannah and Miss Lance came in; the quieting draught was administered, and took speedy effect.

Peter Sands was asleep. The little household went to their bedrooms. The sense of a present danger, and a prophetic fear of a coming trial, were upon them. But they could only hope and pray.

CHAPTER III.

The coroner's inquest was a matter of speedy performance. The man had been murdered. It was for the police to find out the murderer.

James Gardener had received two blows; one was undoubtedly from a fall.

There had once been a gate where this stile now stood, and a low moor-stone post had stood by the side of the path, with an iron hook in it to hold the gate open for the convenience of the farmer who rented the meadows. The position of the gate had been changed, and a stile had been placed where it had stood, as there was a right of way for foot-passengers, and the path could not be blocked up.

The low stone post with the iron ring had never been moved.

A violent fall had brought one side of James Gardener's head against this stone; but on the other side of the head there was a mark which was said to have been the cause of the fall and of his death.

It was not large. It matched one end of the large clasp-knife which Peter said he had picked up. It had possibly been thrown with tremendous force, and with a deadly aim.

It came to all minds, with the strength of complete conviction, that the owner of that knife was the slayer of that man.

There was a day and a night of continued excitement; there was not, perhaps, a living soul in all that seaport town of Tredington, who was of an age to speak on the subject, who did not express some interest in the discovery of the murderer, and was not in some way busy in the matter.

The most silent man in the place was Fred Drake. He seemed like one struck with a sickness of the heart because of the death of his enemy. And he had hated him; and he had thought that he wished him dead; and he had said in his anger that he could kill him. And now the man so spoken of *was* dead, and he *had been* killed; and from every heart there went up a wonder and a great cry—a question as to who had done it.

It did not seem to Mr. Breward an unnatural state for Fred to be in. He felt very kindly towards his nephew, and told him he was sorry for him; but when Fred wanted to visit Peter, Mr. Breward said that Mr. Carter's orders had been so positive as to his patient being kept as quiet as possible, that he would not allow Fred to do more than write a note.

"I won't let you two lads get talking together," he said; "you'll worry Peter into a fever. You are a sad, selfish fellow, you know, Fred; you would gossip him dead, and never know it till it was too late."

So Fred Drake had to bear his burden as well as he could; but he was haunted by the thought of that man being dead.

After one day had passed Mr. Breward received a note from Mr. Bennet very early, before he was out of the room. It contained a few words only: "Come to me immediately, if you can. I want a word in private on important business."

Mr. Breward in less than ten minutes after reading this was at Mr. Bennet's door. He found that gentlemen airing himself on the door-step apparently, but really waiting anxiously for his arrival. As soon as Mr. Breward saw his friend, he also saw that something very serious was the matter. "What is it?" were his first words. "Anything concerning Fred Drake?"

"O, no; Fred is doing well. Come here, into my room." Mr. Bennet led the way into the house, and into the room on the right where breakfast was laid. He stood still, and faced round on Mr. Breward, and said, "Marston, the superintendent, has been here, and—we must manage it the best way we can. They must take Peter Sands into custody on suspicion of being the murderer of James Gardener."

"He! impossible! You can't believe it?"

"No, I don't believe it; but my belief or disbelief is nothing to the purpose. They have got a chain of evidence, and they would have had him in custody by this time, only the Miss Lances are so respected that, feeling the young man was safe, the first thought was to come and tell me and we must be and

break it to them. But I know the story which has been put together, and Peter will have to be committed to jail; and if no other man is found with a grave load of suspicion attached to him, he will be as surely tried for murder as we are now here talking of it."

"It will be the most unheard-of piece of infamy."

"No, no," interrupted the lawyer; "the whole must go by evidence."

"But he did not, could not do it."

"Then he won't be hung," said Mr. Bennet.

"Hung!" The horror in Mr. Breward's face, and expressed by his voice, was such that Mr. Bennet began to expostulate with him.

"Don't be unreasonable," he said. "Unreasonable people never do any good; and that poor fellow is likely to want as many sensible friends as he can get. A man has been murdered. It is the duty of the police to try to find out who did the deed. The only person who can be proved to have been near the place is Peter Sands. He can be proved to have been at the stile close on the moment of the murder. He had provided himself with a knife, which he used, though not as knives are used usually. He knew that James Gardener had been inquiring for him; he had been told that he would be at Stonemoor to see after him that very evening. He had been cautioned; yet he went purposely, and after starting to go back by the streets, the very way in which he would be sure to meet James Gardener, if he had kept his threat of seeking him at Stonemoor in the evening. He returns to Miss Lance's house blood-stained, agitated, injured in the wrist; the place bears the marks of a struggle; and no other man can be found who was near the place at the time, or of whom Gardener had ever said an evil word, except your nephew, who was safe in my house with my wife and her half-sister, who is staying with us, during that time when the crime was accomplished. It is not wrong, certainly, to bring Peter Sands up on suspicion of the murder."

"But you can't believe him guilty?"

"What does that matter?" asked Mr. Bennet. "Is the law of the land not to take its usual course because you and I like Peter Sands, believe him to be an excellent youth, and because he is loved and admired by many respectable persons, and lodges with two charming old ladies? I will grant to you that I consider it one of the most unfortunate, vexatious trials that ever fell on the friends of a good youth. As to Peter himself, I am extremely sorry for him; and all the more sorry because I can see farther into this case than you can. Poor as the evidence is against him, there is not a particle of evidence against any one else. He had been threatened by Gardener. Gardener wished to meet him, and felt himself to have been injured by him irreparably. I never liked Gardener; years ago I said so, and wanted the trusteeship to be vested in some one else. I think myself that there might have been some encounter between them, and that Peter might have acted merely in self-defence."

"But Peter never saw him," said Mr. Breward.

"I am not obliged to believe that," said Mr. Bennet.

This speech vexed Mr. Breward. Mr. Bennet was his friend, and he loved him. But Mr. Bennet not being a Catholic, did not know how severe a judgment he was passing on Peter Sands by those words that he had said. He was calling Peter a liar. For on such an occasion to conceal the truth, when he was pretending to tell it sincerely, was to be base and deceitful in the greatest degree.

Mr. Bennet saw that he had annoyed his friend, and so he went on to justify himself. "You know," he said, "he has not told all the truth about the knife."

"He said that he had bought the knife that evening."

"Yes; but the young man who served him has been got at, and he said at once that he had sold him *two* knives. He sold that evening, to two different persons, at different times, to each two knives; and one of those persons was Peter Sands."

Mr. Breward sat down. He had been standing till this mo-

"This is what I would advise you to do," said Mr. Bennet. "Let me send for the priest from Penwarne. I speak to you as a lawyer. Peter will probably be remanded, and had up again in a day or two. Father Joseph will have more influence in making Peter tell the whole truth than either of us can have."

"I should like to have Father Joseph here; but Peter needs nothing to make him tell the truth. If he says that he bought one knife, then he didn't buy two."

"Well, but the man who served him will swear to it."

"Then he'll hang Peter, perhaps; but he will hang him unjustly."

"Well, well; what I would impress on you is this: feelings are of no use. It is no use to be vexed, or to waste time in standing up for Peter's honor or veracity, or even to talk of religious teaching. Appearances are all against him. A man has been murdered at the stile. Peter was there. It is next to a miracle that he should not have seen the body if the deed were done before he got there; yet he did not see it, and Simon Lyster did. Of course there was a mist; but I must come back to what I began with. Feelings are of no use. Facts have to be dealt with. We will send Fred for Father Joseph. They had better come straight to where the magistrates will be—the town-hall. I suppose the concourse of people will be great. In a place such as this there is never any doing a thing quietly. Fred can bring him there, and go in my gig. Now you and I had better go to the Misses Lance at once; you can go up-stairs to Peter, and I'll stay down with them. We'll send Fred before we go; there will not be anything done till we are there, and the magistrates ready. Fred can make it all fit in. 'There is time,' looking at his watch, 'for a cup of coffee, and we have forgotten our breakfast.'"

"I am not inclined for food," said Mr. Breward.

"If you had done as much disagreeable work as I have had to do, you would be glad to keep your brain steady and your body strong. I always eat and drink. Wholesome food, taken as far as possible with the usual regularity, is a necessary of life."

CHAPTER IV.

This morning Peter Sands was sitting at the reading-table, which was at the end of his room.

He rose up with a smile when Mr. Breward came; but his face was pale, and the smile was not very cheerful.

"Your wrist is better," said Mr. Breward; "but you must have had a dull Sunday yesterday. I would not let Fred come to see you. The doctor thought you were excited, and he wanted you to be kept quiet. Tell me about your wrist."

"It is very much better—nearly well. It is not my wrist that troubles me—and Fred wrote me a note. So they say James Gardener was murdered?"

"Yes; such is the opinion. The magistrates will meet before twelve to-day. You will have to go, Peter."

"O, well, I can go. I was not intending to stay in all day. I shall get to work again, I hope, soon. Being my right hand it makes me useless to you." And Peter once more gave one of those melancholy smiles.

"It is a dreadful business," said Mr. Breward.

He felt so miserable and so awkward. It seemed to be quite impossible for him to tell Peter that he was suspected of being a murderer.

"Yes; too dreadful. I can't get it out of my head. Not that I try; for me, certainly, it would be unnatural not to think of James Gardener."

"I wonder who murdered him," said Mr. Breward.

"Was he murdered at all?" said Peter. "I must think it was some strange accident. Until I found it proved undoubtedly to the contrary, I could never believe that Gardener was murdered."

"I am very glad that Fred Drake was safely housed all that

with accounts still unsettled. The language Fred had used had often been so intemperate, I am thankful to think that every hour of his time for the whole afternoon of Saturday can be accounted for."

"Why, no one could suspect Fred!" said Peter, with an air of surprise. "They might sooner suspect me, I think."

"And you will be suspected!"

Mr. Breward had said the words now; and as soon as they had left his lips he wondered how he had found strength to say them.

Peter saw by Mr. Breward's face more than even his words had spoken. He saw in the lines of anguish, which were not to be controlled, that he was already suspected. He stared at Mr. Breward. He was speechless. He seemed to be suffering some great change—the change of all exterior things. He grasped the elbows of his chair; he had no voice for speech. His great helplessness in the midst of this indescribable woe came like a weight crushing him.

"Yes," Mr. Breward went on, "you will have to go through this great trial of suspicion. Do yourself justice; be as strong as you can. You will have friends by your side. And there is nothing vindictive in it. It arises from the unhappy circumstances—it is the law of the land."

"And it is the will of God," said Peter.

"That is right, my friend," said Mr. Breward eagerly; "that is the way to take it." And those two grasped each other by the hand.

"When shall I have to go?" asked Peter.

"They will come. The superintendent of police will come, and you will go with all of us to appear before the magistrates. Fred is gone for Father Joseph. My dear boy, my dear Peter, I did not know till this moment how I loved you. Have faith in God, and in the friends He has given to you."

"Is it as bad as that?" asked Peter, with his sad smile, and looking at the tears in Mr. Breward's eyes.

"O, it may not be bad at all; and Mr. Bennet is with my aunts. He has told them. He came on purpose to tell them, and I came up to you."

"I think I will go down-stairs to them," said Peter. "I am so awkward with my left hand. Will you give me my hat? Thank you. Now God's will be done!—whether honor and liberty, whether the jail and the gallows, God's will be done!"

He spoke with a sweet quiet steadiness.

"He never did it," said Mr. Breward in his heart. "If I had ever held a different opinion I should change it now."

They entered Miss Lance's drawing-room. Both the ladies got up and went to meet Peter.

"This is a great grief," said the elder one; "but we must not make more of it than it is. There stops the cab, and you have to leave us. You leave a home and friends. Remember your home; remember your friends! O, Peter!" and then Miss Lance could say no more.

Peter held out his hand to Miss Jane and turned away. The superintendent of police was in the room, and a constable was behind him in the passage. In a hurry all the men went out together.

"With me, sir," said Mr. Marston; and Peter, jumping into the cab, found one of the men there, and was followed by the other. Mr. Breward and Mr. Bennet walked by themselves.

Not a single word passed between Peter and his companions while they went on in the cab.

When they stopped, the first person Peter saw was Dr. Beaucherk. He gave his hand to Peter with a look which went to the young man's heart; but not a word was spoken. Then came Mr. Breward and Mr. Bennet. Mr. Maynard the banker was there; and he stretched out his hand to Peter, who took it with an honest smile. Many others were there, and Peter knew that many had come in kindness to him; but he said nothing, and no one spoke to him.

The magistrates were there, and a chain of evidence was begun upon; but Peter said, interrupting the policeman:

"May I not tell my own story?"

at his clerk, who sat at a table near him; but the clerk held down his head, and evidently did not intend to speak unless he was openly appealed to.

"Mr. Bennet, speak for me. I want to tell my own story. I know it is irregular."

There was some talk among those assembled there.

"Is Mr. Bennet watching the case for you? Is he your appointed legal friend in this matter?"

"No," said Peter. "I want no advice, and I can speak the truth for myself."

People consulted again together.

"After the evidence has been heard you can speak."

Peter was silent.

Then came the evidence of the knife.

The ironmonger in whose shop Peter had bought the knife said it was such as he sold, and bore the mark of the maker with whom he dealt. He said that the knives had only arrived on that Saturday afternoon, and so could not have been sold on any other day. Then the superintendent said he was prepared to prove that two knives had been sold to Peter and two to another person on the same evening.

The other person was a stranger to the shopman; indeed, he knew very few people as yet, being himself a stranger in the town. But the other person was a much older man—a rough-looking man, with black hair; not a man in Peter's position of life. He might not know that man again; but he knew Peter. He had seen Peter before, and asked who he was. He knew Peter very well by sight. He had sold him two knives, and had been paid for them that night. There was more evidence from people who had seen Peter that night, and could speak to the way by which he went home; and then, on repeating his request, Peter was allowed to tell his own story. He told it in his accurate way, as he had already told it in Miss Lance's house; but it ended in his being committed on suspicion of being the murderer of James Gardener. He was committed on remand. The investigation would go on; but, in the midst of great regret, Peter was taken to jail; and Mr. Breward went back to tell his aunts what had happened. He found that Dr. Beauchamp had got there before him.

Father Joseph and Fred Drake had arrived before the case was finished, and now Father Joseph had stayed with Peter. He was to be the first friend who would see him in jail.

The first questions asked of Mr. Breward by his good aunts were, how Peter had behaved, and how he would be treated. He satisfied them on both points. He had behaved surprisingly well—yes; just with the natural openness and simplicity of a man who was good, and innocent of the charge made against him.

"He spoke for himself, and spoke clearly. But that about the knives is very queer. One can't help feeling that whoever owned that stained knife was the man who killed James Gardener."

"But Peter says he only bought one knife, and only possessed one such knife."

"Yes; and we believe him."

"Then he is innocent; and an innocent man can't be punished."

"But we must prove him to be innocent," said Mr. Breward.

Then these kind ladies knew how great a danger surrounded their young friend; how hard it might be to prove the truth; and how condemning was the evidence about the knife.

"But it is a lie," said Miss Jane.

"Can you prove it to be a lie?" said her nephew. "There are two—Peter and the shopman—and, speaking of the same transaction, they contradict each other. Peter may be supposed to have an interest in telling a lie; the shopman cannot be suspected of any desire to convict Peter. When he was asked to give an account of the transaction he gave it. He did not know what Peter had already said. He did not expect that their accounts would differ."

"I am sure that Peter is right," said Miss Jane.

"So am I," said her nephew; "but who can prove him right?"

He got up and said "Good-bye." The ladies, once more alone, wandered together up stairs into Peter's room, and up to the glass bower on the roof, whence they could see the walls of the jail where Peter waited. They were very miserable. They had not anything to do but to pray; and pray they did. No souls ever prayed more sincerely for help from Heaven: they were ready to say that there was no helper in man.

CHAPTER V.

Peter was not without sympathy. He was well treated. He had a courtyard to walk in, and he could have all that he required. But he was in jail as one suspected of being a murderer.

Can any one imagine what that must have been? It was true that of the friends who knew him scarcely one believed him guilty. Father Joseph had left him with the most consoling words, both as to help and confidence. He had commanded him not to grieve.

"You have had nothing but good happen to you all days. Be content to suffer. If you have shown a good example in prosperity do not shrink from the opportunity of serving God in adversity. Be faithful still. Be trusting still. Still live close to God. Be content to suffer." His words stayed in Peter's mind, and they strengthened him.

He conformed to rules without a word; submitted to all that there was to submit to without an observation; saw his friends when they were allowed to visit him, took what they provided for his comfort with cheerful thanks, and sent pleasant messages to Miss Lance and her sister.

He was remanded twice. It had got to be wearing to human nature. At last he felt quite as if people were planning against his life. He could scarcely keep from complaining when his friends visited him.

Mrs. Beauchamp came, and even Mrs. Mills; she came with Mrs. Beauchamp. She wanted to cry over Peter, and to tell him that she would never believe that he had murdered her brother—"no, not whatever they did to him!"

It made Peter shrink away from her. How could any one be supposed to believe such a thing? and what could be done to him—to him, an innocent man? The more he heard that Dr. Beauchamp had gone to London to talk to Mrs. Penwarne. He had a strong temptation to wish that his life had never been saved—to wish he had died in his infancy on the rock where the waves had cast him. But he flung the temptation from him. Could he not give glory to God under all and any circumstances? Would he turn away from the will of God? Was it of any fault of his own that he was in this trouble?

Only for a moment now and then was he overtaken by human fear and dread, and by a sense of the injustice he was suffering. His usual demeanor was one of calm, courageous patience, and his general state of mind was entire submission to the will of God.

Peter, after having been twice remanded, was sent back to prison finally committed to take his trial for the murder of James Gardener.

His agitation of mind was very great. And yet not more than a Christian might show; not more than was to be expected of a man in the greatest of all earthly dangers, and unable to help himself.

He knew, however, that God had given him friends, and he was thankful for them.

The assizes at which he would be tried for his life would soon be held; there would be no time to lose, and he knew that every possible effort would be made for him. He knew also that to make these efforts, and to do all that could be done to prove his innocence, was right. It was right to give his will up to God, and he gave it in daily acts of entire submission; it was also right to strive for his acquittal, and to take every of-

fort that friends could make towards that end as expressions of the love and care of his Heavenly Father.

He prayed for God's blessing. He prayed for strength. Every day his courage increased; a calm, strong, enduring state of mind was attained to; it might be called the perfection of fortitude.

Mr. Bennet had undertaken the management of his case. Neither good-will, nor energy, nor kn w edge, nor money was wanting. Publicity was courted; and far and wide, through Europe and Asia, in America, wherever correspondence could reach or newspapers could penetrate, the account of this murder and the whole story of the life of the suspected man was read and listened to and talked about.

Among Catholics prayers went up to the throne of grace. Priests remembered Peter at Mass. Holy Communions were offered up for him by the people.

Mrs. Penwarne had desired that no effort should be spared; Lady Edith had written a note to Mrs. Beauchamp, and she had sent it by Father Joseph for Peter to read. And while this man waited through the days and weeks before his trial could come on, words that had been said to him seemed to fill the air around him, as if angels were whispering these consolations there.

He was a man who could not be idle. His love of reading failed him; under the circumstances in which he lived he could not give his mind to outside things, but his love of drawing came to his help. There was a touch of sadness about the occupation too. The drawing might be something to leave after him. He had a supply of paper, pens, and ink. All the scenes that he found impressed on his mind he put on paper, working them carefully up, like woodcuts, with pen and ink. There was Stonemoor, and the men grouped together telling him of James Gardener's threats; there was Penwarne village, the mansion, the great headlands stretching out into the sea, the priest's house, the church, and the church-yard with the cross that marked where the mortal part of Colonel Penwarne waited for the resurrection of the just.

Doing these occupied his evenings. His days now had dreadful interviews in them—interviews with Mr. Bennet and other men of law, who never argued on the theory of his innocence, as it appeared to him; but always as if he were guilty, and as if it required superhuman efforts of ingenuity to save his life.

At this time of severest trial Peter reaped the fruit of a life in good company, and blessed by habitual acts of piety.

There were no evil memories nor bad thoughts to interrupt the inpourings of divine grace. When a good thought came to him it came in its own purity; and not an idle habit nor any practice of vicious self-indulgence ever came in the way to stop him in his prayers or to prevent him from the performance of the devotions most necessary in his present condition.

The good things that he had heard and liked to hear came to his mind vividly as healing applications to his wounded spirit. So came Mrs. Penwarne's last words:

"Remember this, in the life that lies before you—that God, in His mercy and might, never deserts those who serve Him—never! Never leaves those to themselves whose faith and devotion are known unto Him."

Such words now seemed to have been prophetic. He accepted them with all his heart. He said they were true. He cried, "Lord, I believe, help Thou my unbelief."

When, at times, anguish overcame him he would cast himself at the feet of his Divine Lord. He would fling himself for consolation on that Sacred Heart, from which alone perfect help can come, and where only perfect sympathy can be found.

He had had his sleepless nights, he had shed his bitter tears, he had gone through those terrible torturing conflicts which a man, whom the world believes to be guilty of a hideous crime, and who knows himself to be innocent, may well suffer; and now he had to go through the trial of waiting. He must wait—wait while friends prayed and legal advisers worked; he had to wait for the day of trial, and then to ac-

cept its results. Every help, spiritual and temporal, was his. But the general feeling was that he would be found guilty.

CHAPTER VI.

As soon as Peter was committed for trial the Miss Lances had sent for Mr. Breward.

They had had a profound talk together as to who were to be employed in Peter's case. Lady Edith May had also written for her aunt on this point. It was understood that neither trouble nor money was to be spared to do all that could be done for Peter Sands.

"I wrote to Mr. Monitor," said Mr. Breward, "but he would rather not undertake the case. He tells me so in a private letter."

"He has been very successful," said Miss Lance.

"He is, above all others, the man we want," said Mr. Breward. "I think you had better write to him."

"O, we will write," exclaimed Miss Lance. "We will write to-night."

"Make a personal favor of it. He names another. But Bennet says he can't do without him. We want himself. However, there must be no time lost."

The letter was written, and the result of the letter was that one evening Mr. Monitor entered Miss Lance's drawing-room, and announced that he was come to tea.

After a few words he said:

"I have been to see the young man in whom you are interested. We have been—all three of us—Bennet, Breward, and myself. How very good-looking he is!"

Miss Jane felt as if she could have boxed her friend's ears.

"I suppose," she said, "that we must submit to everything—even nonsense about beauty—to save the life of an innocent man. Are you going to prove him innocent?"

"No, Miss Jane; I am going to save his life."

"That is doing things by halves."

"I think it must be sufficient for the present emergency. Now take me a walk. We can go just where we went that night, or we can be content with a stroll in your garden."

The garden was fixed on. Mr. Monitor loved flowers. He walked and talked. He went through the house. He sat in Peter's room and wrote some letters. They showed him Peter's glass bower, and they took a good-night glance at the prison-walls; which little bit of romance they had now got into a habit of performing every night. The next day Mr. Bennet, Mr. Breward, and Mr. Monitor all lunched at Miss Lance's house. They were dreadfully cheerful; at least so the ladies thought. It made them sad all the evening to think of it, and they went crying to bed.

Just before the day fixed for the trial these gentlemen were again together at Treddington, and they had an hour's talk in the evening at Miss Lance's. The ladies were present.

"Some one," said Mr. Bennet, addressing the two ladies, "has spoken falsely as to those knives. Not a shadow of suspicion falls on any one but Peter. Character will go a great way. Appearances are against him. And appearances must be met by appearances. Help me to think of the best witnesses to his character that we can get together. Of course the shopman is mistaken about the man who bought the knives."

"And is that the best you can do for him—just to get him off, not to prove him innocent? It will be against him for the whole of his life."

Mr. Bennet did not contradict Miss Lance. She said to Mr. Monitor:

"Is that all you can do?"

There was bitter disappointment in her manner.

"We won't let him be hanged if we can help it, Miss Lance."

"And don't you believe him innocent?"

"My opinion has nothing to do with it," he said. "In fact an opinion would only be an embarrassment. The opinion that must be forced upon the jury is that there is not evidence enough to hang him."

"But he is innocent."

"We will hope so."

"He ought to be proved to be innocent."

"At present we have no means of proving that: Mr. Bennet will bring persons to speak to his character. But, no doubt, there will always be persons to believe that he did it. That is a great misfortune, but we can't help that." This was all the consolation the Miss Lances could get the day before the trial.

They complained to each other; they complained to Hannah. Then that good woman closed the door and fell into a fit of weeping.

"Ah, dear ladies," she cried, "All cannot think as you do. I believe he did it. Not another soul near the stile; the instrument of death found in his pocket; a lie ready made in his mouth. The man's gray hairs on the knife, the blood-stains, the wrist wounded, probably in the struggle; the knowledge that the man had threatened to do him harm and to waylay him, and he had been unlike himself for days. No doubt the deed was done in self-defence, but who did it if Peter Sands did not? Only against Peter had Gardener any feelings of vengeance. I can't but believe that he did it, though were I on the jury, and sworn to convict only on the evidence, I might rightly say that the evidence was not enough to prove him guilty. All Treddington will believe him guilty before this day week. The best we can any of us do now is to hold our tongues."

So these words represented popular opinion.

The good ladies felt it terribly. But they were faithful.

"If he had done it he would never have denied it," they said.

At last the day came, and Peter Sands was to be tried for murder.

Nothing could keep the Miss Lances out of court. They would stand by him to the end. Mrs. Beauchamp and Mrs. Breward were there, and Dr. Beauclerk and Father Joseph with them; and with Father Dunstan, the Benedictine, was a lady of seventy years of age, perhaps, not known to any of Peter's friends except to those who were with her.

She was stately-looking, and attracted immediate attention. She was dressed in black silk, and she wore on her head something which had more the appearance of a hood than a bonnet; her face was easily seen, and was of considerable beauty. She was so placed as to be able to see the prisoner, and yet so as not to be seen by him. She took an opera-glass from a black-silk bag, and used it frequently. She was observed to look with great intentness and very frequently at Peter Sands.

Many persons asked the name of this lady, and many more speculated silently as to who she could be. At last some one said that she was Dr. Beauclerk's mother, and this seemed to satisfy people. This was not true, but as she was living in Dr. Beauclerk's house there seemed to be no reason to doubt the accuracy of the information.

This lady remained in court for some time, and then left, being taken away by Father Dunstan.

The business of the trial proceeded as speedily as it could do.

There were no difficulties in the opening of the business.

The court was densely crowded. The prisoner was very pale, very quiet. He gave one glance round, as if to see what friends were there, and then, as if satisfied on that point, his eyes wandered no more; but he appeared to be listening with unmoved attention to the story of his supposed guilt, which was now laid before the judge and jury, before a great assemblage of people, before his own best friends, before God and his Guardian Angel, and which on every point was to be proved by trustworthy witnesses, and which seemed at every step in detail to make him guilty of a deed he had never done.

It was a well put together story. Peter listened to it with intense attention. He could not have contradicted a single word till the story came to his buying the knife.

The history began very early, even with Mr. Bennet wishing James Gardener to retire from the trusteeship, to which, by Colonel Penwarne's will, he was appointed. All the story of Fred Drake and the ninety-seven pounds came out; all that he

had done and said as to James Gardener. All the anger James Gardener had shown against him. All that the man had said at Stonemoor—the opinion of the men that James would try to do Peter some bodily injury; and the very words were repeated which James had used when the Sunday before Great stress was laid on Peter being earlier than usual at Stonemoor on that Saturday, because he had got an engagement to keep with the choir-singers, and it was shown that James Gardener might have been expected to visit Treddington that night, as he often did on Saturdays, and that in, according to his wild threats, he had again visited Stonemoor to seek an interview with Peter, he might have been sure to have been met in the Long Meadows, and that accordingly *there* Peter *did* meet him, and there, under more or less provocation, had no doubt accomplished his death.

Such, in outline, was the story to which Peter listened. It was made to hold well together, and it was put with great force by the counsel against him, and proved by witnesses at every point. Father Joseph, Fred Drake, Simon Lyster, and Mr. Breward were brought forward. One after the other they were handed over to Mr. Monitor for cross-examination, who received them with a pleasant smile, and did no more than ask one or two questions in a gentle friendly way, as if to make one or two points of the story still clearer than they already appeared.

The first day of the trial was over, and everything seemed to be going against Peter. It was as if his best friends had been made to testify against him.

When the second day came, the young man was examined who had sold him the knife. He gave his answers calmly, and with apparently the most perfect truth. But when he was handed over to Mr. Monitor he was not treated as Peter's friends had been.

Mr. Monitor had still the same gentle manner, but there was an earnestness now about him which evidently excited the attention of the court. The jury looked lively, and the young man nervous.

But Mr. Monitor had no intention of alarming this youth at all. He asked him how long he had been in Treddington. How it was he knew so much of Peter Sands. Had he ever spoken to him?

No; he had heard him sing. He had heard him sing several times at a concert and at church. He had often attended the Catholic church on Sunday evenings. Peter Sands sang in the choir. He liked to hear him.

Was the shop in which he served a well-frequented shop? Were there a great many people there on the evening in question?

Yes, an unusual number. It was because of vessels being going to sail that night and on Sunday morning. Sailors came in and made purchases. They often bought knives. They bought small metal plates also, and they had purchased a great many knives on that night.

Did he think that the dark man to whom he had sold two knives was a sailor?

He could not tell. He might have been.

"And how many articles did you sell to the prisoner that night?"

He had sold two knives.

"You must answer my question," said Mr. Monitor, with a smile that struck everybody who could see him. "I have no doubt of your good faith, and that you intend to answer rightly. You are on oath, you know. On your testimony a great deal depends. Now listen to my question again. How many articles from your employer's shop did you sell to the prisoner at the bar on that day?"

With a little confusion the young man said: "I don't know how to answer any better. I sold him two knives."

"But you must mark my words. I did not say how many knives; I said how many *articles* did you sell to the prisoner at the bar?"

"Two."

"Now consider—two?"

"Yes, two."

"Can you remember giving him two articles which he had that night purchased?"

"Yes."

"On your oath, remember, Now take time to consider. Not one only, not three, nor four. Don't hurry yourself—I have no wish to confuse you. I depend on you for the simple truth as you know how to tell it."

"I sold him two articles; I gave two articles into his hands. They were two knives."

"Did any one else in the shop serve him with anything?"

"No, sir."

"Are you sure?"

"Quite sure. I saw him come in, and I watched him out."

Mr. Monitor made a sign to some one, who placed on the table before him a piece of iron like a half-moon, used for cutting grass edgings.

"To whom did you sell that instrument on that Saturday night?"

There was sudden'y a noise—a confusion in the court. Some one had forced a way in; the judge was being spoken to. "Never mind the noise. Did you sell that to any one that night? Don't be afraid."

"I sold it to Peter Sands."

"That is, you sold him two articles, as you have answered on oath, and quite correctly—this instrument and a clasp-knife."

The judge was speaking to some one by his side, but the attention of the jury was riveted on Mr. Monitor.

"Do you wish to correct yourself? Will you now repeat—on oath, mind—that you sold two knives and this instrument to the prisoner?"

"No, sir."

There was now a considerable stir with those who conducted the prosecution and among the jury; the judge rose.

A telegram from the Home Secretary, accompanying the copy of a telegram he had received from Rio Janeiro. The captain of the vessel *Fair Lady*, sailing from Treddington, telegraphed that one of his crew had given himself up as the man who had caused the death of James Gardener by an untoward accident, which he had not expected to end fatally. The coming trial of a man for Gardener's murder having been seen in a newspaper, he telegraphed to stop the trial, and to know what was to be done with the sailor, whose name was Roper.

There was now some talk as to the trial being delayed; but this was even angrily contested by Mr. Monitor.

He said he had two witnesses to bring forward to prove that the instrument before them had been brought home by the prisoner on that Saturday, and with that his case would then be over. The case for the prosecution had broken down. No doubt, two knives had been sold to some young man who looked more like a gardener, and was more likely to buy an edging-cutter, than the prisoner. The salesman, with his head full of Peter's singing, and the chorus of some favorite song probably ringing in his ears, had confused the two persons, and believed that he had sold the two knives to Peter, and the knife and edge-cutter to the other customer. He had given his evidence with honesty of purpose, and had made no more than a natural mistake. He had not been thinking of what he was about. The two customers had very probably stood side by side. Now that the salesman himself abandoned his own story, the true story—that is, the prisoner's story—revived. The stained knife was not his knife; and it was a fact that he had picked it up, as he said he had done. After that there was no case against him. As to returning Peter Sands to prison and delaying the trial, the idea was monstrous. Mr. Monitor said he cared nothing about the telegram. It might be all a hoax, a practical joke—he cared nothing about it. He had concluded his case, and he demanded a verdict; he was sure that there was no ground for a verdict against the prisoner. No jury could convict him.

There was more said, with considerable confusion and much consultation. But at last Mr. Monitor got his way.

The judge addressed a few words to the jury, and a verdict of "*Not guilty*" was brought in immediately.

One woman, unseen and unnoiced, burst into sudden tears.

She hid herself away, choked her sobs as well as she could, and begged pardon in her heart for judgment which, if not rash, had certainly been harsh—for she had been quick to forget the evidence of a good life, and ready to believe evil—and this woman was Miss Lance's Hannah.

"I will never judge another as long as I live," she said in her heart, as she hurried home. "May no one ever judge me as I judged him!"

And yet Hannah loved Peter, and only to the ladies whom she served had she ever uttered her judgment. But she had been quick to believe evil because her feelings had been excited and her heart troubled, and because as James Gardener was dead she could not help jumping at the conclusion that somebody had killed him!

CHAPTER VII.

"Don't talk, Miss Lance. Can't you order dinner? I am exceedingly hungry."

"Really, Mr. Monitor, you are provoking. You were so gentle, so vexatiously quiet."

"O, no; not at last. Why, I scolded everybody, Miss Lance. That is what makes me hungry."

"I can't help wishing for Peter."

"He is best where he is. Father Joseph carried him off. Mrs. Beauchamp was watching for him as if he were her natural prey; and Dr. Beanchark and that grand old lady are gone after him. You know she is his grandmother."

"For shame! But there is our nephew. Dinner will make you hold your tongue."

They were all so excited after getting back from the court that they could not talk sense. Such, at least, was the account the Miss Lances gave of themselves.

"We felt," said Miss Jane, speaking the next day to Mr. Breward, "as if we must either laugh or cry. I would rather have cried. But we had asked people to dinner, and we could not cry before company. We laughed, therefore, instead; but we made up for it afterwards. We cried all night."

"Are you always as glad as you are now when you have won a cause?" Miss Lance had asked this of Mr. Monitor, and he had answered her:

"I always feel the thing a good deal. But I have not always old friends by me with whom I can grow young and play the boy, by way of gentle refreshment. *I like my line of practice*; but I have had enough of work, and would rest if I could. I still say that my line of practice suits me. I like to save a man's life."

"Whether he be guilty or not?"

"Yes; quite regardless of innocence. I ask myself this question, if the man is guilty—Who made me to differ? have I ever had his temptations? was he ever instructed as to the end for which a man is born? was he ever told what that end is?" Miss Lance bowed her head. "If Peter Sands had been hanged he would have gone to heaven." Again Miss Lance bowed her head. "You can guess all I mean, I think." She looked at her old friend with her eyes full of tears. He got up and walked away.

But that night at supper, Mr. Monitor's health was proposed by Mr. Breward, and he returned thanks in a lively little speech, asking to give a triple toast in return.

"*Gossiping Newspapers, Ladies' Gardening, and The Electric Telegraph.*"

This gave rise to many questions. Miss Lance in a walk round the garden had mentioned the instrument for cutting the grass edging, and the probable mistake had crossed Mr. Monitor's mind immediately.

"O, you should have told us," cried Miss Jane; "it would have been such a comfort."

The barrister's face was "too bad;" all present saw it, and answered with a laugh.

Another day dawned. Mr. Monitor was gone; the judge was gone; the jury were all of them at their home again, and pursuing their employments; Dr. Beauclerk had gone to London to see Miss Penwarne; and the good old lady in black was Mrs. Beauchamp's guest.

With her, too, was Peter Sands.

Father Dunstan had gone back to his college, and he had taken Fred Drake with him on a visit. He had taken a fancy to Fred, and Fred had yielded to Father Dunstan's influence. Mr. Breward hoped for good fruit from this friendship, and Mrs. Breward and the M. s. Lances both hoped and prayed.

They looked back and saw how much Fred's folly had had to do with Peter's trial and Gardener's sin and perhaps death. Mr. Bennet had already set to work to arrange for his friend the payment of Drake's debts, and the settlement of the money questions which had arisen between him and Mary Gardener; for her father had died without a will, and to all that he possessed his daughter would succeed. Mary had been told this, and she had received the news with the most entire indifference.

"He has no freehold property," Mr. Bennet said to her; "he has done much in the purchase of the last years of leases, and has made a good thing of many of his purchases. If you will let me advise you, I should say that you had better let things alone—his investments are respectable, and will last your life. They will bring you in about a hundred and fifty pounds a year.

But Mary heard listlessly. She thanked Mr. Bennet, and said, "Don't be hard on anybody, and never let me touch ill-gotten goods."

No more could be got out of Mary. But when she went to her aunt, who was waiting for her in Mr. Bloomfield's house, she said, "It will be fifty pounds a year for you, and Roper, and for me. I can never marry now. I hope he'll take the money.

But we may say here that Roper never did take the money. He came back to England, and was put on his trial; his story was true, and his punishment not great.

He had been coming from Stonemoor, and had overtaken James at the stile. He had reproached James with being the selfish cause of his marriage with Mary being again postponed. James had got violently angry, and had struck Roper, who in self-defence had had to use James Gardener roughly. After Roper had got over the stile, James, from the top of the stile, called to him; when he turned his head he found a sharp stone flung at him, which, but for his dexterity in shielding his face with his arm, must have done him serious injury. He ran back toward the stile, but, remembering that he had not another moment to spare, turned again immediately, on which another stone was flung. On this he flung at Gardener the clasp-knife he had bought and had yet in his pocket. Gardener was still leaning over the top bar of the stile. It had seemed to Roper that he had dropped down to avoid being struck.

Roper had now made as much haste as he could to the house of a friend in Treddington, whom he had promised to see before he sailed. He said nothing about James Gardener, and he remained with his friend about half an hour. He then went to the vessel, walking fast, and meeting Peter Sands, as has been said, just after Peter's leaving Dr. Beauclerk's house.

As to the knives, Roper's story explained that matter in this way. He said that, on the afternoon spoken of, he had bought two knives, one for himself, and one for a friend who had commissioned him to make the purchase. He had not had any intention of buying a knife for himself when he first entered the shop; but, having executed his friend's commission, he was tempted by the remarkable superiority of the knives to buy one for himself.

On his friend showing him his knife, the vessel's cook sent his nephew, a fine youth, to buy two for him; and this young man was buying these knives when Peter Sands was in the shop.

Peter Sands must have passed the stile very quickly after Gardener's death; according to the medical evidence, he must have lived full half an hour after being struck, and falling from the stile, according to Roper's story.

He had had time to recover so far from his fall as to drag himself off the footway to the place where Simon Lyster's dog had found him. Every one hoped that in that half hour he might have had the strength to recommend himself to the mercy of God, and grace to make acts of contrition.

All this came out after the examination of Roper, and after such a time had passed as the circumstances made necessary.

In the meantime everyone had talked of Peter Sands; everybody was full of good-will towards him; and many tried to show it in some way or other, according to their ability.

But Peter was like a man suddenly recovered from a mortal illness. He did not know how to bear his sense of safety, or what to do just at that moment with his life. The weeks he had been in prison had enfeebled his health. He felt as if the sight of the waves, and the freedom of the breeze that blew about him, were more than he could bear.

He had been told in prison that Mr. Monitor did not believe that the evidence was enough to hang him; but that there was no evidence forthcoming by which he could be proved to be innocent. He had known that he might go forth from prison free to live; but he knew that he should be suspected forever of being a murderer; and the weight of that humiliation, and the perpetual sense of so great an injustice, would have been more than a high-spirited man, in the strength of his healthy youth, could have borne without an overpowering gift of grace.

He would rather have died unjustly, if his innocence might have been afterwards proved, than go about as a marked man—as one who had disgraced the memory of Colonel Penwarne, thrown shame on Mrs. Penwarne's goodness, dragged the name of Catholic through the mire, cast aside God's grace, and insulted the Church.

As such he would be reviled, and as such he would be pointed at—a hypocrite, a sinner, a thing to be avoided, a being to be banished from good company, a living example of the evil depths to which a man might fall—a man loaded with favors; a man apparently living a holy life. As such a being he would, he believed, pass from those prison-walls into a world which would fall away from him in horror.

What good would life be to him if his innocence could not be proved?

So, at last, the great final struggle came. He was to give up his good name; and it was dearer to him than life; ten thousand times dearer—as to such a man it was sure to be.

No one but Father Joseph had known of this great struggle in all its bitterness. He prayed; he brought all his natural strength of brain and heart to help the supernatural work that he asked of our Lord to accomplish in him—the willing renunciation of his good name, if such a renunciation should be expected of him.

Yet he was innocent, and God knew it.

And it was his duty not to be a scandal.

His cry to Mr. Monitor had been "*Prove me innocent!*" His entreaty to Mr. Bennet had been in the same words. "Even if I die—if they kill me—never cease your efforts till I am proved to be innocent. Remove from religion the great scandal of the sin of which they believe me guilty."

Much as these men had felt the misery that Peter was going through, they yet had told him the truth—that he would have to live; and that his innocence *could not* be proved.

Such was the sentence that he was to bring himself to suffer.

It was to God alone that, up to this moment, he had owed all things; and now he was to prove that God alone was sufficient for him.

The world—perhaps even his best and dearest friends—would look on him as dishonored, and for all life disgraced. God alone knew that he had not dishonored his holy religion nor disgraced his teaching.

At last he had consented to this loss of all things.

And whatever favor he had gained by a good life in the sight of heaven and before man, it is certain that, by this submission, he accomplished a victory over himself which was most acceptable to God. It was putting God's will before his own will in the most trying moment of life. ' So just as he had taken up his cross, and made ready to endure a life of ignominious suspicion, the cloud passed away. He was free and he was innocent. He was now a hero in the world's eyes, because he had suffered unjustly.

Everybody was ready with sympathy, with congratulations, with assurances of regard. The whole world in which he moved seemed to be thankful on his account. Every imaginable expression of friendship and admiration poured in upon Peter. He might have been anything or had anything that the world could bestow.

But there were a great many practical people who wondered why all this had happened, and who asked for a reason for what they had seen.

It is quite certain that many things are suffered in this life for which there seems to be no reason, and which might very easily have been prevented, as we think, when all is known.

Peter, in spite of shaken health, and a spirit sorely tried, came out of prison a better man, a stronger man, a man living closer to God than when he went in.

But there was a very curious fact to come out on this strange trial, of which we must now speak.

As far as our human eyes can see, nothing but Colonel Penwarne's death would have brought Father Dunstan to the mansion; or sent him, at that time, to say Mass in the Catholic church in the village. Father Joseph, knowing that he should be so far engaged as to want help in the parish church, had gone to Dr. Beauclerk, and through him the assistance of Father Dunstan had been obtained. At Penwarne, Father Dunstan had heard all that there was to tell of Peter Sands, and he had never forgotten him.

The grand old lady in black was Father Dunstan's mother. She had lived in London for about three years, and she had become well acquainted with Mrs. Penwarne and Lady Edith May.

When Peter's great trouble fell upon him, she heard from them every particular concerning him, and she determined on going to Treddington to see him. This lady, who was by birth a Portuguese, had been twice married. By her first husband

she had one daughter, who had married an Englishman. They had suffered shipwreck on their passage from Lisbon to Liverpool, and with their child had been lost. She now expressed her conviction of Peter Sands being this child. There was a curious identity as to time, age, and destination. She had at that time been in the West Indies with her second husband. All enquiries had been made; her son-in-law's friends had written to her; but there had been a fixed belief in the loss of all, and no idea had ever arisen as to the child having been saved. She told Peter what she believed. She wished to adopt him as her grandchild. She produced a miniature of his grand-father, and no one could deny that there was a remarkable likeness in Peter's face to this picture. She said she had observed his countenance as he stood on his trial in the dock, and that the likeness he showed to her first husband as she watched him through her opera-glass convinced her heart of his relationship to him. And now she proposed that he should go to her estates in the West Indies, and take the management of her property there as the assistant of her agent, who had grown infirm, and had suggested that he should have a younger man associated with him.

Peter accepted the offer gladly; and within the month he was sailing to his new home, with Fred Drake by his side, whose thorough change of heart was to be rewarded by a year's travel, and who had chosen to see life in the tropics in company with the friend to whom he owed so much.

* * * * *

For many a year the people of Penwarne have talked of Peter Sands; his example still lives in the village, and the story of his steadfastness encourages the young. He has never forgotten his friends, neither have his friends forgotten him; but the Miss Lances declare they shall never get over parting with him.

They have, however, consoled themselves in some measure by letter-writing; and though mounting the steep stairs to the top of the house, where the glass bower still stands, has with increasing years become a difficulty, it is a difficulty surmounted occasionally, when one sister says to the other, "Ah! there's the jail, and the meadows, and under that holly is the granite stile. It is like looking on Peter's youth."

After this comes the prayer for final perseverance, in which we all can join them.

BLIND AGNESE:

III

The Little Spouse of the Blessed Sacrament.

CHAPTER I

THE lights were extinguished, the people were gone, the orange and the myrtle, the rose and the jessamine, were fading on the floor, and Jesus, who, in the sacrament of His love, had upon that day presided visibly from His altar-throne over the devotions of His creatures, was once more concealed beneath the veils of the tabernacle, where, for more than eighteen centuries, His love had held Him captive. It was the feast of His Most Sacred Heart, which comes to us in the midst of the fervid days of June, as if to remind us of the love with which He burns for us, and of the love with which He would have us to burn for Him; and during the sweet service of the evening benediction, the lovers of that most blest devotion had knelt before Him—some in joy, and some in sorrow; some with souls consciously burning in His embraces; others without any sensible perception of His presence; but all with the prayer of Jacob upon their lips and in their hearts: "I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me." And He did bless them in that hour; He would not be less merciful than His angel—He would not deny the petition which His ministering spirit had been unable to refuse; but high above the altar, in the hands of His priest, amid clouds of incense, and dying strains of music, and tinkling of low bells, and falling of fresh flowers, He poured out upon them His parting benediction—such a benediction as He had already breathed upon His disciples when ascending from them into heaven—a benediction as full of mercy, as full of love, as full of majesty, as full of power, and falling upon hearts, if not as faithful, at least, it may be said, as full of faith. For in that mighty multitude not one was found to doubt of the reality of His presence among them; not one who, with beating heart, and bowed down head, and spirit rapt into hushed and voiceless adoration, did not kneel before his Eucharistic Saviour in the full conviction that His eye was on them, and His heart was with them, and His lips unclosed to speak His blessing, and His hands extended to invoke it on their heads; and with such a faith as this among them, who shall wonder if, when the service was over, and they once more went forth to their homes, it was with hearts lightened at least of half their cares, filled to overflowing in the consolations showered on them by that presence, made even "as a plentiful field which the Lord hath blest," beneath the gifts and graces imparted in that blessing? They were gone, but not all: one there was who yet knelt before His altar, attracted, compelled, chained to it, as it were, by the fascination of His presence. To that wrapt up, bowed down spirit, He was invisible, and yet most visible; He was silent, and yet most eloquently persuasive of His love, and if He were held apart and separated from it by the door of the tabernacle, yet did He draw it to run after Him in the sweet odor of His ointments, until love made Him all but tangible to its spiritual embraces. And in whom, do you think, and in what visible form was this spirit of love and devotion enshrined? It was no aged priest, grown grey in the service of the altar, who now knelt at its foot. No cloistered nun, who had identified herself with the Lord of the sanctuary by a life-long renunciation of His enemy, the world. No high prince, descended from his throne, to adore Him with the Magi. No courtly dame come hither, like another Magdalen, to lay her beauty, her

tresses, and her perfumes at his feet. It was but a poor beggar girl, who, in her innocent years, and her tattered rags, and her humble station, seemed an earthly embodiment of His favorite virtues. If she were alone, or if the crowd were still around her, she knew it not, for her whole soul was with the Silent Dweller in the tabernacle, feeding upon His sweetness who Himself doth feed among the lilies; and yet in that hour a human eye was fixed upon her, and a human mind was speculating about her. Nor was it for her beauty, although the beauty of devotion, the true beauty of the seraph, was beaming from her features. Nor was it for her picturesque appearance, although her rags were disposed as only a lazzaroni of Naples knows how to dispose them—color contrasting color, and patches of black, and scarlet, and yellow, and rich brown mixing together just as they would have been mingled by the cunning of a painter. Nor was it for her youth, although she was but a mere child; children as young are, thanks be to God, no rare sight in Italy, kneeling before His altar. The eye was fixed upon her, in wonder how the human form could remain so still—the mind was engaged in speculation and in question, as to what visible influence it was which could give such deep meaning to that childlike brow, such seraph beauty to those childlike features.

"How motionless she is!" thought this second watcher in the temple, "and how very fair. I wonder how long she will remain in that attitude of prayer. Oh! that I were a painter, that I might give her to the world as my vision of an angel. Surely, she must weary soon. I will wait and speak to her as she is leaving the church."

But minute after minute passed away, and she did not seem to weary. The rays of the setting sun streamed full upon her kneeling form, gave new richness to her many-colored costume, and fell with an almost unearthly radiance upon her brow; and no weariness was to be found upon it—no change of attitude which might convey the idea of bodily or mental fatigue. It was all repose—thought in repose; repose in thought—as if body and soul were both reclining in the arms of one invisibly beside her. And now the watcher herself began to grow impatient—twice she arose, as if to rouse the child from her devotions, and twice she desisted from her purpose, for each time she approached that kneeling figure, a kind of awe, for which she could not account, came over her own spirit—it seemed so like an irreverent intrusion upon the communications of the invisible Creator with the visible creature. Half in wonder, half in vexation, she retired to her own seat, and as she did so for the second time, she discovered that she was not the only one engaged in a similar scrutiny. A door, which she had not perceived before, was open, and an old man was standing near it, not merely watching the child, but making signal after signal that she should approach him. They were all unheeded, for they were all unseen; and then he advanced into the church, his feet falling without sound among the flowers that carpeted the pavement; but when he reached her side he also paused, as if in doubt whether to disturb her or to leave with her God. It was, however, only the hesitation of a moment; directly afterwards he touched her on the shoulder, whispering something at the same time in her ear; and apparently in obedience to his summons, the child arose and followed him to the open door, which closed immediately upon

them, greatly, it must be owned, to the disappointment of the old lady, who had been an interested witness of the scene.

"My poor Agnese," said the old man, with a compassionate smile, "for a moment I forgot your misfortune, and beckoned as though you could see me."

"I knew that you would have work for me this evening," said the young girl, in a voice which fell like soft music on the ear, it was so plaintive and so sweet, "and so I thought I would wait until you came to call me."

"And then forgot the old man, in thought of *Him* to whose service the old man would call you," returned her companion with a smile.

"Yes, Francesco."

"I should like to know those thoughts, my child. Strange it is that one so young should find within herself the source of such deep and holy meditation."

"Not so strange, Francesco; remember I am blind."

"You are right, my child; the good Jesus never withholds a gift without replacing it by another tenfold its value; and so, perhaps, He has but blinded you to the things of this earth, in order to give you a facility for discerning the glories of His invisible kingdom, in a manner not often granted to His poor creatures while yet in the body."

"How do you see Jesus, Francesco?" said Agnese, abruptly. "I know that, God and man, He is on our altars, but then I know not well what an altar is like, and I have never seen a man."

"When I kneel before the altar," said the old man, in the tone and manner of one describing what he sees, and what he is seeing at that moment, "I first say to myself, Jesus is in the tabernacle, I know He is there; I believe it as if my very eyes beheld Him. He is here in His divinity—in His humanity He is there. Methinks, therefore, that I look upon Him in the human form which He took from Mary, but which is now all light and radiance—radiant in its own glorified nature—but yet more radiant in the glory of the divinity, by which it is imbued, and penetrated, and filled to overflowing. I behold Him a God, and yet a man—a man, and still a God; and if the awed majesty of His heavenly Father be throned upon His brow, yet is it mingled with that sweet and gentle look, which made Him on earth so like His Mother."

"Go on, dear Francesco," said Agnese, sitting down at his feet, and covering her face with her hands; "go on; I love to hear you."

"Yet doth He wear the garment of His shame, but now woven of the light which the Lamb sheds over His loved in heaven, flows it in robes of brightness to His feet. Yet doth He bear the crown with which our sins have diademed His brow, but now the lustre of millions of millions of diamonds seems concentrated in every thorn. Yet doth He show those wounds which, in His hands, and feet, and side, He refused not for our love; but for the blood once shed therefrom, streams of glory and of sweetness are pouring from them now. And beneath this glorious veil of His humanity methinks I discern the light inaccessible of His divinity dwelling within the sacred heart, as in its temple, and from thence pouring itself forth in floods of grace, and gladness, and mercy on His creatures. Within that sacred heart is love, and peace, and holy calm, a silence inexpressible—around it are spirits bowed, cherubim and seraphim, in reverent adoration. There have the weary of earth found rest at last, and the saints their exceeding great reward, and Mary herself her heaven of heavens. Methinks that He is inviting me, even me, the most sinful of His creatures, to the embraces of that most sacred heart—that He holds out to me His wounded hands—that, out of the very depths of His tenderness, He is speaking to my soul, and fixing on me those eyes which once were fixed in dying sweetness on His Mother; and so, in awful and yet most calm affection, I kneel before Him, and press to my lips that robe which once imparted of His virtue to the sick woman of the Gospel; and kiss those feet which were not refused to the embraces of Magdalen; and inhale the fragrance of those wounds, once terrible in their

gore, but now so beautiful and so sweet—sweet with the 'smell of Lebanon,' the odor of His ointments. And then at last," continued the old man, and his voice grew tremulous and 'full of tears,' "it seems to me that He permits me to a yet closer union with Himself, that He even says: 'friend come up higher,' that He folds His arms around me, that He lays my head upon His sacred bosom, breathing of paradise, that He draws me even to the centre of His sacred heart, and in its holy stillness imparts to me those lessons of heavenly love and wisdom, which once by His living lips, He gave to His disciples. And what are those lessons, dear child, if they are not contained in such words as these?—'Blessed are the poor in spirit; blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted; blessed are the merciful, for they shall find mercy.' Or again—'Learn of Me, for I am meek and humble of heart, and you shall find peace in your souls. My yoke is sweet, and my burden light.' And I listen, dear Agnese, until my very heart and soul seem steeped in the sweetness of these words as in the dew of heaven; and then I say, not indeed by lips, but by the internal language of the spirit: 'Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth; Thou hast the words of eternal life; say to my soul, I am thy salvation.'"

"That is very beautiful, and of great devotion," said Agnese, and for an instant there was something of sadness in her sweet, low voice; "but then, you know, I cannot think or feel that way, because I cannot see; therefore, I cannot image to myself what Christ is like in His glorified humanity."

"Then tell me, Agnese, what it is that draws you to His altar?"

"I can hardly tell you, it is so much easier to feel than to describe. I am drawn to Jesus, I know not how—embraced by Him, I cannot tell you in what manner. It is as if a spirit of awe, and power, and majesty, and greatness, was overshadowing the sanctuary, awing and hushing every creature into silence; around that holy spot do angels and saints keep sleepless watch, and the Mother of God is ever there. I do not see them, but I feel them at my side; sometimes in silence they adore; sometimes in strains of sweetest music they sing His praises; and ever and always they cast their crowns before Him, and send up incense from their golden horns, and scatter the flowers of Paradise at His feet; and so it seems to me, that all the perfumes of the earth are not so sweet—all the music of the earth is not so full of harmony and love—all the brightness and glory of the earth are not and cannot be so glorious and so bright, as is the Holy of Holies where Jesus ever dwelleth in the tabernacle of the altar. Francesco, I do not imagine that I see Him there; for methinks the light of God, which is in Jesus, and which Jesus is, must be as darkness itself to human eye and human understanding. Neither do I know what sight of earth is like, but this is my thought of the light of heaven, and from out that visible, tangible darkness, Jesus draws me to Himself until my soul seems to leave the body, to be lost and swallowed up, and forget itself in His immensity; or rather perhaps it is that He Himself draws near to me, nearer and nearer, closer and closer, until He is in my heart, and in my soul, and in my very body filling every sense with joy, satiating every feeling with delight, forcing me to weep tears of delicious sweetness, and to say, as it were, in my own despite: Lord, let me never see; it is joy enough to feel Thou art so near."

It was no child who spoke such words as these. For a moment Agnese was not a child; she looked and felt like a seraph at the altar. So Francesco fancied, as he looked upon her, but he did not tell his thought. He remembered that her angel, who saw the face of the Father in Heaven, would have reason to complain if he injured the humility of the little one by words of praise; so after a moment's reverent pause, he only said:

"Agnese, your words reminds me of a story which I read many and many a long year ago, about a child, not older, if indeed as old, as you are."

"Tell it to me, if it be about Him, Francesco," said the child, "particularly if it be true. There, now I have settled

myself nicely at your feet, and I shall listen quite at my ease."

"I cannot answer for its being entirely true, and it is so long since I read it, that I almost forget it. She was an orphan, brought up from her earliest infancy in a convent of which her aunt was abbess. I think her Heavenly Father must Himself have chosen out this sanctuary of peace for His little one, in order that no obstacle might be opposed to the graces which He had reserved for her innocent soul, and by means of which He so drew her to Himself, that, from the earliest dawn of reason, her thoughts seemed to turn as naturally to Him as the thoughts of other children do to the toys and ornaments of her age. From the moment she could speak, her words were of Jesus; from the moment she could walk, her feet ever turned towards the altar of Jesus; spiritually every day, and every hour of the day, she united herself to Him by her fervent desires; although far too young to be received into sacramental communion with Him, yet was this the object of her most earnest aspirations, of her unceasing petitions. Day after day she used to accompany the nuns to the church, and to watch them with eyes of envy, as two by two they approached the altar, and two by two returned to their places; and when she saw them depart in peace, because their God was with them, she would prostrate herself at the feet of the abbess, and implore her with many tears to give to her this Jesus, in whose embraces she herself was so happily folded."

"And they would not?" said Agnese, in a tone of deep sympathy.

"She was so young, my child. But, young as she was, God had given to her a faith, a perception of the real presence of Jesus in the sacrament, which saints deem themselves happy to attain after years of penance, solitude and prayer; and often she has been heard to say in her sorrow: 'He is near, and I cannot approach Him; He is here, and I cannot possess Him; He is with all the others, and I alone am deprived of His embraces.' Of her it might be truly said, that she mourned like the dove, whose sweet name she bore, for she did languish and pine until her bodily health sank beneath the vehement desires of her soul. Her step grew languid, and her cheek grew pale, and her soft eye softer and softer still, and yet, within its depth of softness (so the old legend tells us) a light, as if of heaven, did dwell; and still the languid step led her to the altar, and the weary head was bowed before it, and the eye was turned in patient sorrow towards the dove that watched above it, floating calm, and silvery, and pale, beneath the lighted lamp of the holy place, and seeming to tell, even in its outward form, of Him, the peaceful and the pure, who night and day reposed within its bosom."

"Him, Francesco! do you mean Him? Was Jesus really dwelling within the dove!"

"In those days, Agnese, the Blessed Sacrament was not kept upon the altar; it was placed in a silver vessel, suspended from above, and most often, I believe, fashioned in the likeness of a dove—a dove, chosen, perhaps, because of the sweet and loving qualities with which our fancy has invested her. Yes, and I may also say, within which God Himself has chosen to surround her, making her ever, as it were, His messenger of peace to mankind. And so it may have seemed right and fitting to the early Christians, that she, who brought the olive branch to Noe, should likewise bear *Him* above that altar, to which never would He descend except in thoughts of loving kindness to His creatures."

"A dove," said Agnese, thoughtfully; "that is for meditation, is it not?"

"True," said the old man; "so she would also remind them how they were to meditate like doves before Him, and how they were to put off their rough, ungainly notions, and to put on His meek and dove-like spirit, for He was a very dove in heart, and He came to us through the dove-like Mary."

"Tell me now about the child, Francesco, and what was her name. Did you not say that she was the name-sake of the dove?"

"She was called Colomba; I know not whether for her

sweet and quiet disposition, or for the sake of her silver favorite and companion at the altar."

"That is well, Francesco; but I am called Agnese, and that is better still. For I am the namesake of the Lamb, and not of the chalice in which He is contained."

"Colomba grew so weak at last that she could neither walk nor stand, and then they would carry her to the church and lay her on the pavement just beneath the silver guardian of the altar. Here they used to leave her—for she always was best pleased to be left alone with Jesus. But often they watched her through the hours when she deemed herself unseen—and those who did so have left it on record, how she would lie motionless as one in a slumber, her hands folded on her bosom, her eyes lifted to the dove, which through the feeble light and gloomy shadow, seemed watching her from on high—and ever and anon, after a long and loving silence, she would say, in a voice so sweet and sad, it might have been the very mourning of the quiet bird she looked on—'Oh, that the dove would descend and give Him to my prayers.'

"One day she seemed so feeble, they almost feared to move her, but she prayed so earnestly to be carried to the church for the last, last time to visit Jesus, that the nuns had it not in their hearts to refuse her petition. So they bore her to His altar, and then, yet more earnestly than she had ever done before, she besought them to leave her to herself. It always appeared strange to them afterwards that they should have done so; they did not understand their feelings at the moment; but later they confessed to one another that a kind of awful love had crept over their spirits, she looked and spoke so like a creature acting and speaking under the influence of the Spirit of God, her very words penetrating their hearts with a kind of celestial sweetness, such as they had never felt or known before. It seemed almost, to them, as if some hidden influence had left them no choice but to obey her.

"One there was, however, not quite so submissive to the wishes of Colomba; this was her little sister, who was passionately attached to her, and to whom she herself was fondly devoted. The child, it appears, could not bear to leave her, ill and alone, in that gloomy church, so she hid herself behind one of the pillars, and watched her from a distance.

"Then, as ever, Colomba folded her hands upon her bosom, and lifted her eyes to her silver dove, and said so softly and beseechingly: 'Oh, that thou wouldst descend and give Him to my prayers.' And then—scarcely could the child believe her eyes—slowly and steadily, through the dim shadows of the evening, the dove descended—the light of the lamp above gleaming brightly on its silver wings—and, as if some secret spirit gave her power, Colomba rose to meet it. And her folded arms were folded still, and her head was bowed in lowliest prayer, and she knelt, yet scarcely did she seem to touch the pavement, and a soft and silvery mist seemed floating around her, as if to fold her from all mortal vision. And then, in fear and wonder, the child ran to summon her companions; but when the nuns returned with her to the church, the dove had re-ascended to its former position, and the child lay once more stretched upon the pavement—peace on her brow, an unutterable expression (it could not be called a smile) yet resting on her lips. The nuns were frightened at her stillness. They drew near, but she did not move; they spoke, but she did not answer. They kissed her, but no look of gratitude was returned for their embraces. Still seemed the bird of the sanctuary to brood over the fair child, but Colomba no longer had need of its assistance—closed were the eyes which had been fixed upon it so often and so long, hushed was the voice which had called it from on high. The dove's celestial habitant had taken her to Himself, and the child was dead."

"Francesco! But He had come to her in her dying hour?"

"Who can tell," replied Francesco. "This much, indeed, is certain, that when the dove was lowered, one was missing of the sacred Hosts which had been confided to its keeping; and so the nuns were left uncertainly to conjecture, that Jesus, whose delight it is to be with the children of men, would not refuse Himself to the embraces of this child, nor suffer her soul

to go forth from her body until He had blessed it by His sacramental presence. And—but you can guess the rest, Agnese. The joy was too much for her wasted frame—she died in that moment of unutterable bliss.”

There was a long pause, and when Francesco looked again upon his young companion, he saw that she could not speak, so fast were the tears streaming from her blind eyes.

“To die of love! it was indeed a death to die, more blessed than any life could be,” he added. There was another pause, and then Agnese whispered, in a voice which seemed, to the old man’s fancy, as the very echo of Colomba’s:

“Oh, that the dove would descend once more, and give Him to my prayers.”

“We must have patience a little longer—*fanciullina mia*. You are older than the little Saint of whom we have been speaking, and soon Padre Giovanni will begin to talk of our first communion.”

“Soon! do you think he will talk about it soon, Francesco?” said Agnese, her whole face lighting up with a look of joyful surprise.

“I must not reveal the Padre’s secrets,” said the old man, smilingly; “only wait a very little longer, and then we shall see; but in the meantime, dear Agnese, we will work for Jesus with Martha, that we may have the happiness of resting afterwards at His feet with Mary. See, here are the little corporals for the wash; and remember, dear child, we are rather in want of them just now.”

“You shall have them by to-morrow morning, Francesco.”

“Nay, my child, you must not sit up all night to do it. The sweet Jesus would never demand such a hard task of His little one. Time enough, if you bring them to me in the evening.”

“You shall have them in the morning, Francesco,” replied the child, in a tone of quiet resolution. “Adieu, Francesco.”

“Adieu, my child. What have you done with Perletta?”

“I left her at the porch.”

“Well, you have kept her a long time waiting. You had better make haste and seek her, else, if you leave her alone much longer, perhaps she will take it into her head to go home without you, as she did once before, Agnese.”

“She has never played me such a trick but once, Francesco. No, no; there is no fear of Perletta; she is grown very patient.”

“Well, I am glad of that, Agnese. Adieu, my child.”

Francesco left the vestry through another door, just as Agnese opened the one by which she had entered it with him, stumbling as she did so over the old lady whom she had so long and unwittingly left waiting on the outside. Determined not to leave the church without speaking to the child, and yet feeling too weary and tantalized to remain patient any longer, she had just made up her mind to break in upon her conversation, when, as we have seen, Agnese opened the door, and in her blindness stepped directly upon her feet. The sufferer uttered an involuntary scream, and then, as sufferers will upon such occasions, she could not resist saying in a petulant tone:

“You have hurt me, child; if you had not left your eyes before the altar, you might have seen that you were walking quite over my feet; one would fancy you were blind.”

“Pardon me, Madam,” said the child, in a voice of distress, but which had not even the shadow of impatience in it—“pardon me, for I am blind.”

“Blind! Good God!” cried the old lady, “how cruel I must have appeared!”

And then she looked more steadily at the child, and she saw that although the young face was turned towards her with an expression of sympathy in suffering, the eyes were not lifted to hers as they would so naturally have been. The lids were closed, the long lashes swept over her cheeks—there was no temptation to raise them, for sight there was none beneath.

“Alas, poor child!” said she again, struck by the meek and holy expression of that face; “how long have you been thus? or were you, indeed, as I should think, born blind?”

“I know not; but I do not remember ever to have seen the light, Signora.”

“And are you here alone? have you no one to lead you home, my child?” asked her companion, now in a tone of tenderest compassion.

“Si, Signora; Perletta is waiting for me at the porch, and I can always go as far by myself.”

Without saying another word the old lady led her down the aisle, as far as the open gate of the church; there the child paused, and thanked her gently for her kindness.

“I will trouble the Signora no farther,” she said; “the dog will see me home. Perletta, Perletta!” but no Perletta, answered.

“My child, no dog is here,” said the old lady, anxiously.

“I fear it has forsaken you.”

“What shall I do!” said the poor child, sadly, “My God! what has become of Perletta? Never but once before did she desert me in this manner.”

“Whither do you want to go, my child?” asked the old lady, more touched than ever by her forlorn look and evident distress. “Tell me where you wish to go, and I will gladly lead you thither.”

“The Signora is very good; I thank her with all my heart,” said the child, submissively. “It is only to my grandmother; she sells lemonade in yonder grove; perhaps the Signora knows her already, for she often deals out iced waters to the fine ladies who leave their carriages to rest beneath the shadow of the orange trees.”

“The old woman who serves out water from the fountain, is your grandmother? I know her well; many a time have I tasted her delicious lemonade. Come, my child, we shall soon be there, and your grandmother shall give me a glass of iced water for my reward.”

“He will give the Signora a better one, some day, I hope, for her kindness to His poor blind lamb.”

“Tell me, what is your name, my child?” the old lady asked again, as they took their way to the orange grove.

“I have said it, Signora—it is Agnese; that is for lamb, you know. So they call me Blind Agnese; and sometimes in sport, the children name me, also Little Spouse of the Blessed Sacrament.”

“Little Spouse of the Blessed Sacrament!” said the lady in an under-tone; “what a strange name, and what a strange child. And does not this blindness grieve you?” she said aloud.

The question sounded cruel, and the lady felt it did; yet she could not resist the temptation of trying to penetrate the secret feelings of this child, who had interested her so strangely.

There was no trace, however, of pain or regret upon Agnese’s face as she answered:

“It would grieve me sadly, Signora, were it not for Him.”

“For whom, my child? the old man I saw speaking to you just now?”

“No, Signora, not Francesco, though he is a kindness and a comfort also. I spoke of Francesco’s Master and mine—of Jesus—of Him who made us both—of Him who dwelleth ever with us on our altars.”

“You speak of God, my child,” said the lady, reverently.

“He, in truth, is everywhere; but you cannot see Him on the altar.”

“No, Signora; but I know Him to be there. I feel that He is with me, and I with Him, and so I do not want for sight to see Him.”

“And is there nothing, then, you want to see?” The old lady went on, as it were in her own despite, for she felt all the danger of awakening regret in so thoughtful a mind. “The light, for instance—the glorious light of Heaven—the sun, the moon, the million of millions of stars that tell us of the glory of their Maker?”

“No,” said the child, “for I have Him who made them, and He Himself is the ‘light of the world.’”

“Or the beautiful face of nature—the deep valley, the

mountains—your own Vesuvius?"

"I have Him," said the child in an untroubled voice, "and He is mightier than all His works."

"Or the buildings of your city—the stately palaces, the sainted temples? Yonder little church, for instance, which we have just quitted, and which might have been the work of angels or of fairies, it is so spirit-like and full of grace?"

"These are but the creation of man, Signora;" and there was a shade of grave rebuke in Agnese's voice; "and if I long not to behold *His* works, shall I sigh to look upon His creature's?"

"Well, Agnese, the flowers, at least, are His own lovely work of love; tell me, do you not sometimes sigh to gaze upon the flowers, which He has scattered so profusely over this soft southern land? Never have I walked before among such flowers, with their velvet-like richness of touch and hue, and their perfume, which comes over one's senses like a dream of beauty."

"They *are* soft to the touch, and sweet to the senses," Agnese answered, after a moment's pause. "And He was called the 'flower of the root of Jesse.' So they must be precious things, those flowers! But yet," she added, in an assured and earnest tone, "I do not regard them, for I have *Him*, and He made them, and beautiful as they are, He must be a thousand million of times more beautiful than they are."

"Happy child," said the lady, sadly, "He hath, indeed, robbed you of your sorrow; would that I knew where you had found Him, that I might go and seek Him also."

"Do you not know where to find Him?" said Agnese, in great surprise. "He is ever on the altar; if you are in sorrow, go and seek Him there, and He will speak sweet comfort to your soul."

"Tell me, fair child, who has taught you to think and speak in this manner?"

"Francesco, Signora; he has taught me to know and love Jesus on the altar."

The lady did not answer. Something in the child's voice and manner had recalled sad memories to her mind, and her tears were falling fast; nor did she seek to check them until they had nearly gained the fountain, and the grove to which their footsteps were directed. There they found Agnese's grandmother plying her usual trade before a table, made very gay to look at, by the four painted stakes, placed one at every corner, and decorated with images of Saints, colored flags, and bunches of lemons, and bouquets of flowers, to say nothing of the ten already lighted lamps gleaming like fire-flies among the shadows of the trees. A cask, in the form of a drum, filled with clear ice, and water from the fountain, was placed on this table, which likewise displayed an abundance of clean glasses and lemons for the preparation of iced lemonade.

Many and grateful were the thanks of the old dame to the good Samaritan who had brought her back her blind one; and having accepted a glass of iced water, and pressed an alms into the unwilling hand of Agnese, Lady Oranmore stepped into her carriage, which had followed her from the church, promising herself, however, to return the very next day, and renew her acquaintance with the fair child of the fountain.

How often, during her drive to Naples, did the words of Agnese recur to her memory—"If you are in sorrow, go and seek Him on the altar, and He will speak sweet comfort to your soul." She was not a Catholic, that old lady, or she would have better understood the deep meaning of these simple words—the holy truth, that He, whose dwelling was in the bosom of His Father, could yet find no peace for His loving heart, until He had made Himself a home among the children of men, until He had imparted unto them the sweetness of that humanity, all the bitterness of which He had reserved for Himself. And so He came to us, the Virgin's child, the meek and holy Jesus, to dwell forever with us in the Sacrament of His love, never again to be absent even for an hour, from the world of His redemption and especial predilection—ever living for us, with us, and among us. In the noontide glare, in the midnight gloom, in the crowded city, and in the

lonely country's most lonely places, still and forever to be found upon our altars, from thence giving rest to the weary, comfort to the afflicted, calmer and holier joy to the glad of heart; leaving it to no creature of earth to say that he had sought his Lord, and had not found Him, or that he had been near Him, and had not been invited to the embraces of His love. Happy they who seek the invitation, and happier they who hear it, and obey it, by dwelling, if not always in the body, at least always in spirit and desire, beneath the shadow of His altar. These are they of whom it has been truly said, "They shall eat the honey with the honey-comb," for they shall taste and see that the Lord is sweet; that they shall find the tears wiped away from their faces; they shall draw water in joy from the fountains of the Saviour; and they shall testify to the truth of the promise made to us by His own living and most sacred lips, a promise only not oftener fulfilled in ourselves, because we seek not its proper fulfilment in Him—"Come to Me, all you that labor and burdened and I will refresh you."

CHAPTER II.

Sign the cross, and strike the breast;
Banish looks of lightsome cheer—
Heaven's monarch, mortal's guest—
Lo! our Jesus draweth near.

One thou lovest, Lord, is ill,
As of old, is now the tidings,
And, as then, it finds Him still
In His love that call abiding.
"Sign the cross, and strike the breast," etc.

Quicker even than He went
To the loved of Bethany,
Now with thoughts as fondly bent
On this loved one cometh He.
"Sign the cross, and strike the breast," etc.

If His own no longer flow,
Still He dries the sinner's tears;
If no grief is on the brow,
Still, its look of love it wears.
"Sign the cross, and strike the breast," etc.

If no more from out the grave
He doth bid the dead arise,
Still, the sinful soul to save,
On the sinner's heart He lies.
"Sign the cross, and strike the breast," etc.

Bids him put aside his fear.
Bids his trembling all to cease,
Whispers in his dying ear
Words of pardon, hope, and peace.
"Sign the cross, and strike the breast," etc.

Jesus, when my hour is nigh,
Let me rest Thy arms within;
Thus to die is not to die,
'Tis but to quit a world of sin.

Sign the cross, and strike the breast;
Banish looks of lightsome cheer—
Heaven's monarch, mortal's guest,
Lo! our Jesus draweth near.

Seated in her balcony, amid orange trees and myrtles, and all the sweet growth of that southern clime, Lady Oranmore listened to the soft voices of the singers as they slowly approached the palazzo where she dwelt. It was midnight, but she had not been able to repose as yet; her thoughts were running on the blind Agnese; and the look of inexpressible peace, which could give such beauty to those pallid features, haunted her still; and the inexpressible devotion of that voice, as once, and once only, it had reverently pronounced the name of Jesus, still seemed to ring in her ears.

Over and over again she asked herself, why it was that she ever knelt with an unsatisfied heart and a cold and hungry spirit before the self-same altar, where this poor child had but to come to be replenished with delight. Yes, and Lady Oranmore could not deny it to herself, with heavenly wisdom also—

the wisdom so often withheld from the proud, to be lavishly bestowed upon the humble and the poor. Alas!—like Pilate, Lady Oranmore asked: What is truth? and, like him she waited not the answer, but, impatient of her own feverish fancies and sleepless couch, she rose, dressed herself hastily, as I have already said, and stepped out upon the balcony. It was a lovely night—such a night as that on which the prophet looked, when he declared that “the heavens show forth the glory of God, and the firmament declareth the work of His hands.” The deep blue sky of Italy seemed to grow deeper still, as Lady Oranmore gazed upon it, until she felt as if she were looking into it, and through it, and beyond it; and from out of this azure setting the stars met her glances with looks so conscious and so calm, that she could almost have persuaded herself theirs was the light of angel eyes, not merely watching over a sleeping world, but engaged in penetrating into the hidden depths of her soul, and reading all its secrets. The calm night air soon soothed the perturbation of her spirits, and she was fast sinking into a sort of dreamy calm, when the first notes of the Hymn of the Blessed Sacrament fell on her ears; and here a door and there a window opening, told how all the people were now astir, some going forth to join in the procession, others content to sit in their balconies and mingle their voices with the burden of the song. The voices of the singers were sweet and true, and the air they sung most touching; and ever and anon the tinkling of the little bells, which announced the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, filled the air with a melody so spirit-like and sweet, one might have fancied them rung by the hands of the angels who invisibly crowded round the sacramental presence of their Lord. Lady Oranmore looked and listened like one entranced. Holy stars, and silver moon, and perfume-breathing flowers, and calm of sea, and hush of earth, the silent heavens, and the voices of His adoring creatures, all seemed mingling together to do Him honor in the lowly state in which His love had laid Him. For one brief moment, the very sweetness of Jesus Himself seemed to fill her bosom, and she believed in His sacramental presence with a faith as firm as the most undoubting of His worshippers. Tears gushed into her eyes, she clasped her hands, and exclaimed aloud, unconscious that she was repeating the very words of the hymn to which she had been listening—“Oh, so to die is not to die! Good God! To go to Thee with Jesus in my bosom!” By this time tapers began to burn in every balcony, light flew as if by some invisible communication from house to house, from window to window, and the street, which a few minutes before had been as dark as night and the tall shadows of buildings could make it, became bright and glittering, as though a shower of stars had suddenly descended upon its gloomy places. Not a window without its light—not a black speck left to mar the effect of the general illumination. The mighty faith of the people stirred the heart of the lady to a yet higher pitch of enthusiasm, and, by an impulse for which she never afterwards could account, she stepped back into her chamber, lighted a taper at the night lamp left burning there, and, setting it among the flowers of the balcony, knelt down to worship Jesus as He passed. The procession was almost beneath her window as she did so. Surrounded by a guard of honor, the priest who bore the Blessed Sacrament walked beneath the canopy, of which the silver bells announced his coming to the people; and among his immediate assistants, some carried banners and crosses, and others sent up clouds of incense from their silver censers; while the people followed, some near and some at a little distance, some with the intention of attending to the dwelling of the dying person, but the greater number merely dropping into the procession, and after walking with it a short space, returning to their homes. Lady Oranmore thought of His entrance into the cities of Judea, and of His meek and holy bearing, and of the crowds that gave Him welcome, and of the little children who sang hosannas, proclaiming Him their Saviour—and, won by the self-same spirit of love from whence they took their inspiration, for a little while she believed as they did. But her faith, alas! like theirs, was fleeting; and, as He who had in-

spired it passed slowly out of sight, it would, perhaps, have also faded from her bosom, had not her eyes fallen upon the form of a child—of Blind Agnese—for what child save Blind Agnese could have been found with courage or devotion to wander through the streets at that late hour? Lady Oranmore was neither young nor active, and though well acquainted with Naples, she was timid, as people often are in a strange and crowded city. Even in the broad daylight she had never ventured in the streets alone, yet now she could not resist the impulse which prompted her to cast a large mantle over her shoulders, to quit the balcony, descend the stairs, and join the procession, side by side with the Little Spouse of the Blessed Sacrament.

The wide street and the open square were soon left behind, and poorer grew the aspect of the houses, and poorer still the class of persons who joined in the procession as it passed along; but still the harmony of the hymn was heard, new voices linking themselves on to the silver chain, just where the old ones dropped it; and still the streets, however dark and squalid they might have been before, put on a robe of light and brightness to welcome its approach. At length it paused in one of the dirtiest of those dirty streets of which there is no lack at Naples. The song was hushed, the tinkling of the bells was heard no more, and in their stead arose the low murmur of prayer, as the people fell on their knees in all the mud and filth of that most filthy pavement. They thought not of these things, however, for they were in the presence of Him before whom cherubim and seraphim do veil their faces; and how should dainty thoughts and earthly niceties intrude upon their minds? It was in truth to no kingly palace, to no lordly possessor of the earth, that the King of kings had come in person. The dwelling into which the priest now entered could only have been willingly chosen by voluntary poverty, or unwillingly forced upon that which was involuntary. At another time Lady Oranmore might have trembled to find herself alone and unprotected in such a place at such an hour; but now something which was neither curiosity, nor yet devotion, nor yet a settled purpose of any kind, seemed to draw her footsteps onward. She felt as if she were obeying an invisible spirit, and as if that spirit resided in the person of Agnese; and, acting still upon the same irresistible impulse, when the child arose and followed the priest into the house, she forgot her native shyness, and stepped over the threshold with her.

In a miserable room, on a miserable bed—if, indeed, the head of reeds and Indian straw could be so entitled—the stricken deer of the flock was lying. It was no sudden accident or sickness which had brought her there. The wasted form, the sunken cheek, the hectic color, all told of the slow progress of that disease which inch by inch bears its victim to the tomb.

Confession had probably gone before; all the history of that young life had been told to God and to His minister, and the words of peace and pardon had been poured into her ear—the “go in peace” of the Saviour who now had come in person to fill her heart with hope, and her soul with joy; and hope, and joy, and heaven itself, were all so vividly impressed upon her pallid face, that, but for the poverty in which she was enveloped, and the lights around her bed, and the tears of the widowed woman (so soon to be a childless mother) who knelt beside her, she might have seemed to the excited imagination of Lady Oranmore, not a dying woman, but an angel—not a spirit ascending to the sky, but one descending thence, to speak by her looks of the happiness of heaven. She felt all this, for she had hardly time to think it, or to place herself on her knees in a distant corner, where she could see, without being seen, before the voice of the priest was heard, the mother hushed her sobs, and the girl seemed to try and still her labored breathing, in order to catch the import of his words. It was the Sacrament of Extreme Unction which he was about to administer, and Lady Oranmore soon became absorbed in her deep attention that most touching ritual, by which the Catholic Church invokes the pardon of an offended God upon every faculty of the dying person. The service was

In Latin, but the priest translated each separate invocation into Italian, which every one present understood, and none seemed more entirely to comprehend, or more fully to enter into their spirit or their meaning, than the invalid herself. She answered every prayer as well as her failing voice would let her, holding out her hands spontaneously, and it almost seemed joyfully, for the sacred oil with which they were to be anointed; and when the last and most sacred of all rites was given—when Jesus, as the Viaticum, the companion of her voyage descended into her bosom, such a sweetness stole over her pale face, that Lady Oranmore felt as if she could have gazed upon her forever. Never before had she seen such a conscious joy in the hour of death. But the priest and the people were all departing, one or two Sisters of Charity alone remaining to aid the mother in the last offices of her dying child; and thus reminded that she herself was only an intruder, she turned to look for the child who had so unconsciously conducted her thither. Agnese was kneeling a little apart, in the very attitude in which she ever knelt before the altar, only now she held in her clasped hands the string by which her dog was fastened, while the animal itself lay at her feet still and quiet, as if accustomed to such scenes, and possessed of an instinctive consciousness of their awful nature. In a few minutes more, however, the child arose, laid a piece of silver on the pillow of the invalid, and glided softly to the open door. Lady Oranmore followed her directly into the open street, which, lately so full of light and people, was now as dark and silent as the grave; and she could not help shuddering at the idea of this poor child, whose misfortune would have rendered her so peculiarly helpless in the hour of danger, walking alone at that late hour through the deserted city. Suddenly, as this thought crossed her mind, she resolved to follow and to see her to her home; but she did not tell Agnese of her intention, nor did she even acquaint her with her presence, for she had a sort of desire to accompany her without her knowledge, and to behold her in a place where she could not be supposed to be influenced by the presence of strangers.

In taking this resolution, no thought or fear of personal annoyance presented itself to her. She was little in the habit of calculating consequences, and at this moment was wrought up to a pitch of enthusiasm which carried her so far beyond the ordinary rules of prudence, that she ever afterwards felt as if throughout the night she had been acting in a dream. With all her courage, however, perhaps she was not sorry to find that Agnese's route, traced out for her with unerring certainty by Perletta, brought her to a part of Naples with which she herself was perfectly acquainted; so it was with more of curiosity than of any other feeling that she followed the child into one of the poorest houses of the poorest streets of the city, and up flight after flight of stairs, into a small, close room, where, by the light just dawning in the east, she could dimly discern a table and a chair, and in one corner something like a bed, with a human figure stretched upon it.

"Agnese," said a voice from beneath the coverlet, which was unmistakably that of the old dame of the fountain.

"Grandmother," replied the child, kneeling by the bed.

"Where have you been, my child?"

"I have been with Him, mother; He went to visit Sister Rosalie."

"Sister Rosalie! who is Sister Rosalie, Agnese?"

"She is of the Order of Penance of the Blessed Father, St. Francis. All Naples know her well, mother. She lived among the poor, and served them as she would have served Jesus Himself, had she lived in the days of Magdalen and Martha."

"Mother," said Agnese again, after a little pause, "when I heard His bell, I guessed it was to the poor He was going; so I took the piece of money which the lady gave me, for Rosalie is very poor, and the little she has she gives to those who are even poorer than she is."

"It is well, my child; you did right. Now come to bed, Agnese; it is time you took some rest."

"Say rather it is time to rise, mother, for day is dawning in the east, and I have promised Francesco to bring him the cor-

porals this very morning. Sleep still, dear mother. I will call you when your hour arrives."

The old woman made no answer—she was already fast asleep and then Agnese set about her task with as much precision as if in perfect possession of her eyesight.

Lady Oranmore watched her for a few minutes; but fearing the old woman might awaken and discover her at her post, she at last reluctantly withdrew. The church bells were all ringing, and the people everywhere astir in the city, by the time she gained her palazzo; and feeling far too excited for sleep, she ordered her carriage, and drove at once to the Church of the Blessed Sacrament, with the intention of questioning Francesco concerning his blind *protegé*. For this purpose she thought it best to go at once to the door by which she had seen him enter the church in his search for Agnese; but it must be confessed that when he himself opened it to her little tap for admittance, she felt rather embarrassed how to begin the conversation. After the awkward pause of a moment, however, she succeeded in shaking off her little hesitation, and in saying, with all the frankness so natural to her—"You will think me mad, I suppose, if I tell you I have come to make inquiries about the blind child I saw you speaking to yesterday. She has interested me most strangely."

"The Signora's madness is not so strange to me," said the old man, with a smile, "for it is one in which I share."

"But who is she—what is she—what makes her so unlike other children of her age?"

"Who is she? She is Blind Agnese. What is she? A little beggar-girl—that is her only dignity, except when children call her in sport, 'The Little Spouse of the Blessed Sacrament,' so devoted is she to this mystery of love. And what makes her so unlike other children? Even He Himself, who loves them all indeed, but who seems to have called this one more especially to live at His feet."

"I can comprehend this child being very dear to God, but I cannot fathom the mystery of such deep thoughtfulness in one so young."

"That is as much as to say we cannot fathom the mystery of His deep love for His creatures. But if the Signora will believe me, there are many little ones full as thoughtful as Agnese, only we do not often see them, for they perish early—young flowers they are, forced into premature bloom, to be cast on the path of the Lamb in heaven. And then," yet more earnestly the old man went on—"and then, you see not, lady, that God is so good! He seldom denies one gift without bestowing a greater in its place; and if Agnese is blind, He has yet given her to behold her Saviour in his own Sacrament of Love, by a clearness of spiritual perception which the saints might even envy."

"And has she been ever thus?" returned Lady Oranmore. "Was she never a child like the rest? Or is this a second nature, the offspring of her misfortune?"

"She has been thus ever since I have known her, but possibly it is a mixture of nature and of grace. There was a calm and thoughtful nature to begin with, and the grace of God took that nature and replenished it with sweetness."

The old man raised his eyes to heaven, his countenance overflowing with the very expression of sweetness of which he spoke. Lady Oranmore began to think him almost as interesting and quite as incomprehensible as Agnese herself. She had yet to learn the spirit of joy which Jesus pours out upon the soul that touches Him, as it were, in the Sacrament of His love.

"Tell me how you first became acquainted with her, for you say, 'since I have known her.'"

"It was about this time last year. I had some corporals and other linen to be washed for the altar, and I went into the church to seek for some child who might do it—"

"Child!" echoed Lady Oranmore; "I should have thought an older person better suited to the task."

"It was only a fancy of my own. The Signora must understand I always give them to a young child to wash. It seems to me He will be best pleased afterwards to repose in the

Blessed Sacrament upon linen which only such innocent hands have touched. And then, He so loved the little ones—the sweet and loving Jesus. Surely the Signora has not forgotten how He bade them to approach, and would not have them to be forbidden, seeing that of such is the kingdom of heaven.”

Lady Oranmore was silent. The loving faith of the old man seemed to rebuke her own hardness and incredulity of heart. And, finding she made no answer, Francesco proceeded :

“As the Signora already knows, I went into the church, and there, just as she beheld her yesterday, was Blind Agnese kneeling before the altar. It seems to be her natural position. I never saw her in any other at her prayers. Not liking to disturb her, I went back again, and returning in half an hour found her still in the same attitude of devotion. This gave me a feeling of curious interest about her, so I waited until she rose of her own accord, and then followed her to yonder orange grove, and to the fountain, where an old woman sits preparing iced water and lemonade. If the Signora ever passes that way and feels weary with her walk, she will find a chair placed pleasantly in the shade—the perfume of the orange and acacia will revive her—the lemonade is excellent—and then the Signora will be doing an act of charity to Blind Agnese, for that old woman is her adopted mother.”

“That old woman—I know her well. But is not, then, Agnese her real grandchild?”

“God only knows to whom the orphan really belongs. I questioned the old woman, but all she could tell was that she herself had been an itinerant water-seller, and that one day, in the course of her trade, she had offered refreshments to a foreign lady sitting at the corner of the street with an infant in her arms. The lady eagerly accepted a glass of water, but before she could carry it to her lips she fainted away. Happily, she had fallen into the hands of a good Samaritan. The old woman had her carried to her own home; but it was a hopeless case—the poor lady was dying.”

“Dying!” said Lady Oranmore, in a strange, unnatural tone. “Of what, I pray you, was she dying?”

“Poor lady! of hunger in the first instance, but I fear of a broken heart in the second. She had not long to live, but she had time, at least, to tell her story before she died.”

“And that story?”

“It was a sad one. She was not of Italy; but in the distant land from whence she came religion, it seems, is made a subject of oppression; and he who dares to worship God after the fashion of the ancient Church is liable to fine, imprisonment, and perhaps to death.”

“No, no,” said Lady Oranmore, “not now to death, my friend. But tell me of the lady.”

“Her mother, it seems, was of the king’s religion, and made it part of her creed to hate all who did not think fit to profess it.”

“Was it thus she spoke of her mother?” Lady Oranmore asked, in a quick, agitated voice.

“Alas, no, Signora! Her words were full of tenderness and love. It was I who spoke in the bitterness of my soul, to think how religion could ever be made a source of disunion between child and parent.”

“Her heart was always loving and forgiving,” said the lady, with difficulty repressing her tears.

“The Signora knew her, then?”

“Go on, friend. What next?”

“But little, Poor lady! her story was as short as it was sad. She married a Catholic, became one, and displeased her mother. Still, in her husband’s love and the approval of her own conscience, she was happy; and so she might have remained to this very hour, had it not been for another law of that unhappy land, by which, as well as I could understand it, one brother conforming to the king’s religion might claim the property of the elder.”

Lady Oranmore groaned aloud.

“The gentleman,” pursued Francesco, “was one of three brothers; and the youngest of the three was such a one as I

have described. So one night just after the birth of the poor, blind child, he came, claimed the property as his own, turned the sick lady, the new-born babe, and another child, some years older, out of the house, and sent them adrift upon the world.”

Lady Oranmore now sobbed aloud.

“The Signora has a good heart—she can feel for the distress of those poor outcasts of religion. That night she took refuge in the house of a poor retainer, who braved the anger of the new lord to show his gratitude to the old one. It was necessary, however, that they should fly the country; for the renegade, not content with reducing his brother to beggary, had likewise accused him of malpractices against the government. On hearing these sad tidings, the mother of the lady relented; she came and begged her daughter to reside with her; but the wife felt it both her duty and her happiness to cleave to her husband; so a very few hours afterwards they were together on the wide waters of the ocean, seeking with their poor blind child, in a foreign land, the protection denied them in their own.”

“And the oldest child?” asked Lady Oranmore quickly.

“Ah!” said Francesco, shaking his head sadly, “that was the deepest grief of all, I think, to the dying lady. She could not tell what became of it. It must have been left behind in the hurry and confusion of their flight, which of course, was made in the hours of darkness. But unhappily they missed it on boarding the vessel in which they were to sail, and no entreaty could prevail on the captain to delay their voyage, even for an hour. Poor mother! She never mentioned her lost one without piteous moans. The murder of her husband scarce seemed to have made such an impression on her mind.”

“Murdered! Good God! was then poor Edward murdered?”

Francesco looked curiously at the lady.

“Ill-luck attended them from first to last,” he said. “They were scarcely in the Italian seas before their vessel was attacked and taken by pirates. The poor gentleman fell fighting gallantly under the very eyes of his unhappy wife.”

“Alas! alas!” cried Lady Oranmore, weeping; “my poor, unhappy May, a prisoner in the hands of pirates!”

“She was not with them long. Two or three Neapolitan vessels were in sight, so the pirates took everything of value out of the ship, and set it on fire. The lady was rescued from this grave of mingled fire and water, and landed on the coast from whence, with her infant in her arms, she begged her way to Naples. Happily she had learned our language from her husband, who had been brought up among us—education being, it seems, one of the blessings denied in his own country to men of the proscribed religion; and yet, starving, heart-broken, helpless, and a stranger, how she managed to make her way so far has ever been a mystery to me.”

“Go on, old man! What next? I conjure you what next?”

“Why, finding herself so near to death, she sent for a priest to make her peace with heaven. From him she received all the last rites of our holy religion. The old woman has often told me since, that it was a touching sight to see; for nothing would content her but she must have her infant in her arms when she received Jesus in the Viaticum; so I always think it was then and there the child imbibed her strange love for Him in His Sacrament of Love. Surely He passed in that hour from the bosom of the mother into the heart of the child.”

“And then?” sobbed Lady Oranmore.

“And then,” echoed Francesco, “she died as might be expected. In peace she died. God stilled the violence of the storm which had swept her young days in sorrow into the grave. To His fatherly tenderness she consigned her child; and in the sacramental embraces of her Saviour she herself went down to death, amid such sentiments of love and peace as St. John may have felt when resting his head on the very bosom of the living Lord.”

“And left no message—no memorial?”

“I had forgotten. She gave a packet to the old water-vender,

charging her to keep it safely, together with the signet-ring which she wore upon her finger. Poor thing, she fancied some of those whom she loved so well might one day come and seek her out, and adopt the poor blind child for the sake of its mother. She was mistaken, however; years have passed away, and Agnese knows no other relative than the poor old beggar-woman whom Providence sent as the protectress of her infancy."

"Old man! old man!" cried Lady Oranmore, wringing her hands in anguish, "accuse me not—I am the mother of that unhappy creature."

"Yes," she continued, after a long pause, during which her sobs and tears had prevented her from speaking; "I quarrelled with her because she obeyed the dictates of her own conscience, and became a Catholic; and when I afterwards beheld her driven a fugitive from her native land, I stole her eldest child, intending to undo the wrong I had done her, by making her heiress of all my wealth. I had not had the child a year when it disappeared, and God forgive me if I have done him wrong, but I have ever believed it was stolen by its unnatural uncle, and perhaps put to death, lest it should hereafter prove a troublesome claimant of his wealth. But you wrong me if you fancy I abandoned my unhappy May without inquiry as to her fate. I did all I could to find out the place to which she and her husband had retreated. You see yourself this was no easy matter, and it was all the more difficult because of the wars which so often interrupted the communication between the countries. Unable, however, any longer to endure the suspense, I have spent the last two years wandering about Italy, seeking my lost child from city to city, but until this day without the slightest clue to the right one."

Francesco was moved at her evident distress.

"Providence has been good to the Signora," he observed at length; "He has been over her in all her wanderings, and has at last guided her to the very spot where she may recover all that remains to her of the treasure she has lost."

"Old man," cried Lady Oranmore, dashing away her tears, "where is this precious packet? Come with me, I pray you—I must see this old woman this very instant."

"It is not in the possession of the old woman, Signora; she confided it to the care of the nuns of the Perpetual Adoration; their convent is not far from hence. If the Signora pleases, I will gladly guide her thither."

"I thank you," said Lady Oranmore, lowering her veil and rising from the low stool upon which she had been seated; but she staggered, and would have fallen, had not Francesco given her the support of his arm.

"The Signora is not well," he observed; "had she not better defer this visit?"

"No, no," cried Lady Oranmore, impetuously; "anything is better than suspense. I must see this packet. Yet surely, I have not a doubt, Agnese is my grandchild—the child of my poor unhappy May."

Francesco was well known at the convent, and the superior made no difficulty in submitting the packet and the signet-ring to Lady Oranmore's inspection; the latter gazed at it long and silently through her tears.

"Yes," she murmured, "it is her own handwriting, I cannot be mistaken; and this is her signet-ring, which I gave her myself on her wedding-day. I must have this packet," she said, suddenly looking up; "It will be needful should the identity of the child be disputed by her relations."

The superior colored; but no human respect could deter her from her duty.

"The Signora must pardon me," she said; "I doubt not it is all exactly as she says, but the packet was entrusted to my care; and should any others hereafter inquire for it, how am I to show that I was justified in delivering it now?"

Lady Oranmore pulled a pocket-book from her bosom; it contained a lock of golden hair, and a few papers, yellow and worn, not so much with age as with constant reading, and perhaps also with the tears of the reader.

"Here," she said, "is all that remains to me of my ill-treated

child. Never does this packet leave my bosom; sleeping or waking it is ever on my person. See, here is the copy of her marriage certificate—the original, I do but not, is sealed up in your packet, and here is a long letter, addressed to me, on her change of religion; it is in English, so you cannot understand it; but here is something that you can—the note in which she informed me of the barbarous conduct of her brother-in-law. Happily she wrote in Italian, that it might not be deciphered, should it fall into hands for which it was not intended. Read it, read it."

The superior took the note from the lady's trembling hand. It told, in sweet and touching language, the misfortunes of the writer—of her husband's flight, a few hours after the birth of his child, on a groundless suspicion of treason—of the rage of his brother at the escape of his victim—of his cruelty in turning her and her children out of their home—and the blindness which had fallen on the youngest, in consequence of cold caught by the sudden exposure. It traced the place to which she had retreated, and the arrangements which her husband was making for their flight into Italy; and it ended by a moving appeal to a mother's love for an only child, beseeching her to pardon and send her such a benediction as, had she been dying, she might have craved at her hands.

It was impossible to doubt the evidence of this note: handwriting, seal, and signature, all perfectly agreed with the packet already in possession of the nun. She no longer had any difficulty in surrendering it into the hands of its new claimant. Lady Oranmore eagerly broke it open, and found it to contain, as she had expected, the marriage certificate of May Netterville, with the copies of the baptismal register of both her children, as well as the beginning of the Gospel of St. John, which, in Ireland, was generally suspended from the neck of a newly-baptized infant.

"Yes," said Lady Oranmore, "it is sufficient; this will make Agnese the heiress of her mother's fortune, and, perhaps, even the lawful claimant of her uncle's ill-gotten wealth, should the man ever become a Catholic again, as, in a fit of remorse, I sometimes imagine he will."

She spoke in English; the superior, therefore, did not understand her; but there was a harshness in her tones which she did not like; and how indeed, could it be otherwise? The voice is so often an index to the thoughts, and Lady Oranmore's were at that moment less with her unhappy child, than with the man who had done her wrong.

"There is a lock of hair which has escaped the Signora's observation," said the mild religious, hoping thus to call her to her gentle meditations.

Lady Oranmore took it up. It was, indeed, a lock of her own hair; and tears gushed in torrents from her eyes at this new proof of the enduring affection of her child.

The superior saw that she had produced the wished-for emotion, and she went on, although with some embarrassment, caused by the fear of giving pain.

"There is yet another visit which, perhaps, the Signora would like to make before she leaves the convent." Lady Oranmore shuddered; she felt she was summoned to the grave of her child.

"It is true," she stammered; "I had intended to have asked it as soon as I could find courage."

The superior took her arm, and in a few minutes they were in the little cemetery belonging to the convent. A lovely spot it was, shut out from all save the eyes of heaven, by the tall ilex trees with which it was surrounded—each little lowly grave was surmounted by a cross, telling of the hope of those who slept beneath, but bearing neither name nor date upon it. Name and date were unheeded there, for the slumberers in that sanctuary of peace were all the faithful spouses of a crucified God, who had written their names in the palm of His hand, from the day when, by their life-long dedication to His service, they had spiritually died, for His love, to the world and themselves. One grave there was, however, which was not so nameless—it was beautiful with many flowers springing from the turf, and white with the blossoms of the orange and the myr-

tle, which had fallen in showers upon it; and the cross above it bore a prayer for the repose of the soul of May Netterville, to whose remains the rare privilege of burial within the cemetery of the convent had been accorded, because (so the inscription stated) she had died far from her home and her own country, poor and alone and friendless in a foreign land. The superior-ess pointed to the name, and then, with intuitive delicacy, silently withdrew, leaving the unhappy mother to her own reflections. Bitter, very bitter, because mingled with much of self-reproach, they must have been; and when, half an hour afterwards, the nun returned, she saw that Lady Oranmore had been weeping violently, and guessed from the disordered state of her dress and bonnet, that she must have been prostrate on the grave of her child.

"Weep not for her, dearest lady," said the nun, kindly; "she died happily, and she rests in peace. See, we chose the sweetest spot in all the cemetery for her, just beneath the shadow of this beautiful myrtle, and we took all the rarest flowers of our garden to plant them on her grave. We did not then know that she had a mother; but I well remember it was agreed among us to receive her precious remains with all the love and reverence a mother's heart would have been consoled to offer, or see offered to her child."

Lady Oranmore could not speak her thanks just then, but before she left the convent, she pressed Mother Matilda's hand to her lips, and besought her, in moving terms, to continue her kind care of the grave where all her own hopes of happiness lay buried. Then, with a myrtle branch, which she had brought from thence in her hand, she left the convent, leaning, as before, on the arm of the good Francesco.

"And now where does the Signora wish to go?" he asked. "She is tired, and would she not like to go to her palazzo for a little repose?"

"No, no," said Lady Oranmore, "I can have no repose until I have embraced my grandchild. Let us seek the old water-seller at her stall."

"Ah, poor Benita!" said Francesco, shaking his head; "it will go hard with her to lose her darling. I greatly doubt she will break her old heart."

"I should be very sorry so to grieve her," said Lady Oranmore, compassionately. "Think you she would come with me? I would gladly give her a home."

"It is kind of the Signora to say so; but no—I think Benita would not be happy that way either; she is too old for new friends and a new country. Better to promise the child shall sometimes return and visit her."

"That I can readily do," said Lady Oranmore, sighing, "for I also have an attraction in the grave of my child, which will often bring me to revisit this land."

"Yonder is the orange-grove where we shall find Benita and her grandchild; and now that the Signora has found her own, may heaven prosper her as she deals rightly and fairly by the child whom Providence has so wonderfully restored to her care."

Lady Oranmore changed color; her conscience told her she was neither going to act rightly nor fairly by the child or its dead mother; for well she knew that mother's heart, and she felt that May Netterville would rather have bequeathed her little one to the care of the poorest beggar in the land than to the guardianship of anyone who would tamper with her faith.

"But, what then!" thought Lady Oranmore, seeking her excuse, as all worldly-minded people do, in the expediency of the thing. "The happiness of my poor May is no longer dependent on the religion of her child; and, besides, she did not bequeath Agnese to me. I found her for myself; and this surely gives me a right to do as I please; and if I do not please to bring her up a Protestant, she will not only lose her chance of the broad lands of Netterville, she will even forfeit all right to the estate she ought to inherit from me: for the next in succession is a Protestant; and I know him too well to suppose he will forego his legal claim from any sense of justice towards me or mine."

By such a train of reasoning as this she contrived to stifle

her own scruples on the subject; but feeling instinctively that her arguments would have little weight with Francesco, she made no other reply to his observations than the very significant one of quickening her footsteps on her way to the fountain.

Three days afterwards Agnese knelt for the last time before the altar of the Blessed Sacrament in her favorite church and Francesco, stood beside her; she was in tears, for she had that morning bid adieu to the kind old woman who, for so many years, had cherished her as her own; and now a yet more cruel separation was awaiting her in her parting with Francesco, and her farewell to the dear little church where she had enjoyed so many hours of calm and heavenly devotion. Little less sorrowful was the old man himself. Something there was in Lady Oranmore's manner, which made him tremble for the future religion of his darling, and he was sorely perplexed how to fortify her against this danger, and, at the same time, to avoid filling her mind with fear and distrust of one whom it would be her duty henceforth to reverence as a mother. Small time had he to revolve the matter in his own mind, for a servant entered the church to say that the travelling carriage was at the door, and her ladyship desired the presence of Agnese. The child arose; but Francesco laid his hand on her shoulder, and said to her, in a voice so solemn that she was startled by its strangeness.

"Tarry yet another instant, my child, and listen to my words. Agnese, Jesus is on the altar; He is looking on you—listening to you; and if ever, on this holy spot, you have promised to be faithful to Him in the Sacrament of His love, renew that promise now; give it into the hands and the heart of the Immaculate Mother, and she will place it for you in the sacred heart of her Son."

These words of the old man seemed to penetrate Agnese's very soul; she sank on her knees; and said, in a low but earnest voice:

"I do promise to be faithful to Jesus, even unto death."

"Unto death," repeated Francesco; "aye, that is the right word for the child of martyrs. Be faithful to Jesus unto death, if you would have Him faithful to you unto life everlasting. Agnese, they may seek to make you desert the religion in which He alone is to be found; but believe them not my child. Never pray in a church where He is not."

"I will not," said the child: "but how am I to know?"

With something like inspiration, Francesco answered:

"Ask whether a lamp is burning before the altar. If there is not, leave the church; for Jesus is neither in it nor of it."

"I will, Francesco."

"You may have much to go through of trouble and persecution, my child. But here is a picture; it is of the sacred hearts of Jesus and Mary, and they are wreathed together by thorns."

Agnese kissed and placed it in her bosom.

"Thorns, Agnese," proceeded Francesco, "are rude to the touch, but the flowers they guard are always the most safe, often even the most full of sweetness. What heart so pure—what heart so sweet—what heart so sorrowful as the heart of the Virgin Mother of God? And of her it is written, 'She was a lily among thorns.' Think of this, my child; and should the thorny diadem ever descend upon your brow, receive it lovingly and thankfully, seeing it will make you resemble her."

There was so sad a foreboding in Agnese's heart as she listened to these words, that, in her fears for the future, she almost forgot her present sorrow, hardly heard the remaining words of Francesco, was hardly conscious of his final benediction, although she had fallen on her knees to receive it, hardly even felt Lady Oranmore embracing her as the child of her lost May. She only knew distinctly that she was leaving the land where Jesus dwelt upon every altar; and, sinking back in a corner of the carriage, and burying her head on the neck of Perletta, the little Spouse of the Blessed Sacrament murmured through her tears:

"Oh! that the dove would descend and give Him to my prayers!"

CHAPTER III.

"On! that the dove would descend and give Him to my prayers!" It was Agnese's last prayer on leaving Naples; it was her first on arriving at Oranmore Castle. Her troubles, in fact, seemed about to commence just where most little heroines of romance find a termination to theirs—that is to say, in a loving protectress and a magnificent home.

Not that she had felt positively unhappy during the journey; her feelings had been rather stunned than excited by the sudden change in her position; she could not perfectly understand its reality, or comprehend how it was that a few days before she had been the grandchild of a poor water vender, and now stood precisely in the same relationship to a lady ranking among the richest and noblest in the land. Neither did she imagine herself so entirely separated, as in truth she was, from all she loved and cared for upon earth. She would revisit Italy; so Lady Oranmore had promised her grandmother; she would sit once more beside Benita, near her orange-shaded fountain; she would kneel with Francesco before the altar of the Blessed Sacrament; and then nothing, she knew, could separate her from Jesus; His altars were everywhere, and He was everywhere on His altars; and never did she pass a single day during their journey without seeking Him there.

Long before Lady Oranmore or her attendants were awake, Agnese was on her way to the church of the town or village in which they had spent the night. And for this happiness she was indebted to the unerring sagacity of Perletta, who knew her wishes quite as well as she did herself. She had only to say, "Alla chiesa! alla chiesa!" and Perletta looked to the right and looked to the left, pricked up her ears, and set off directly in the direction in which the church bells were ringing; nor did she ever fail in the object of her search. Sooner or later the church was found, and the blind child conducted through the gates, and along the aisle, and up even to the very rails of the sanctuary; and there Perletta would coil herself comfortably up into a little round ball, and fall fast asleep; while Agnese, on her part, reverently knelt down to pray, by the modesty of her attitude and the tenderness of her devotion unconsciously preaching the sweet Jesus to all who saw her.

It cannot be supposed that Lady Oranmore particularly fancied these lonely expeditions, yet she did not forbid them, because unwilling to commence her guardianship by such a disagreeable act of authority; and finding, at last, that Agnese always returned without accident, she took confidence in the good guidance of Perletta, and lost all her anxieties on the subject, if indeed, she did not forget it altogether. Her memory, however, was suddenly refreshed by a rather unpleasant incident which took place on their arrival at Dover. They had only landed the night before, but, though feeling sick and giddy from the rough sea voyage, Agnese could not resolve upon giving up her visit to the church, so she rose early, and descending into the street, shook the ribbon round Perletta's neck, and said, as usual, "Alla chiesa! alla chiesa!"

Alas for poor Perletta! For once her sagacity was completely at fault. She had hitherto always had a clue to her destination in the ringing of the bells, the thronging of the people without, the low murmur of prayer within; but now in vain the snuffed air, in vain she ran backwards and forwards, up the street and down the street. The poor dog was completely bewildered. It is true she came to a church, but the doors were closed; the bells were silent; not a creature was lingering near it. Perletta was not used to see deserted churches, so she very naturally passed it by. Her next essay was the market-place. There was plenty of people here, and something more than the murmur of voices among its buyers and sellers. But Perletta understood markets quite as well as she did churches; and being a dog of sagacity, she knew that this was not precisely what Agnese wanted; and therefore she trotted on until she arrived at the theatre. It so happened that a celebrated actor was to perform there that night, and hundreds of people were already at the doors to secure themselves places. Perletta began to think she was right this time,

but a kick from an impatient by-stander speedily convinced her of her error, and howling with pain, she ran off so fast that Agnese had some difficulty in keeping up to her paces. On their way back, they once more stumbled on the church; and this time the bells were tolling, for a funeral was to take place there that day. What wonder if Perletta was deceived! She trotted up the steps, and finding the gates still closed, very contentedly coiled herself up at their entrance, thus giving Agnese intelligibly to understand that she had accomplished her mission, and would go no further. The blind child took the hint and sat down on the steps, resolving to wait there until the church should be opened. But minute after minute passed away and no one came. And now the poor little Italian began to shiver in the cold; yet, perhaps, it was not altogether the unaccustomed rawness of a British morning which made her tremble; there was a vague fear also falling around her, which seemed to penetrate and chill her very heart. It was so strange to her that a church should be there, and no one to enter it; that the bell should be tolling, and no one be found to obey the summons. Poor Agnese! she was not much of a philosopher, I am afraid, for at last, finding herself disappointed in her hopes, she could scarcely tell wherefore, she put her arms round the neck of her faithful Perletta, and burst into tears. Her foreign dress, her desolate attitude, the dog, which everywhere betrayed the secret of her blindness, soon drew a crowd around her; and innumerable were the conjectures, some in jest and some in earnest, elicited by her singular appearance. "Who is she? What is she? Has she lost anybody, or has anybody lost her?" Sometimes the spectators addressed these queries to Agnese, sometimes to each other. The child grew every moment more bewildered. She felt the crowd pressing heavily around her; she heard their questions, though she could not understand their import. And once she even rose with the intention of making her escape, but suddenly recollecting her inability to do so, she sat down again, trembling violently, and weeping more bitterly than ever.

"Do be quiet," said an elderly gentleman; "you terrify the child with your chatter. What is it, my little one, and why do you weep so sadly?" he added, addressing Agnese.

The blind child did not understand this speech, but she answered in the only English word she could as yet perfectly pronounce—

"Church—Church!"

"She must be a furriner," said a sailor. "They are used to having churches always open in furrin parts."

"That's it," said another. "Look at all her furrin gew-gaws. I suppose that this little Papist spawn is one of the party from the packet last night."

"A Papist!" said a tall, evangelical-looking person, with a vinegar aspect; "the Lord preserve us! It would be a charity to send her to the poorhouse, poor benighted individual!"

"It would be a greater charity to see her safe home to her friends, I should say," said Agnese's self-elected champion, indignantly eyeing the vinegar-faced evangelical. "Harkee, Mr. Sailor, what inn did this foreign party put up at?"

"Star and Garter, sir; and I won't take upon me to say this young un was among them. But there were some furrin parrots, that I'll take my oath of, they were chattering at such a precious rate as they stepped out of the packet."

"Well, we can but try. Come along, my little maid. I will see if I cannot make out your friends for you," said the gentleman, taking her hand; and Perletta starting forward at the same moment, Agnese had no choice but to obey.

The inn was easily found, and Agnese restored to her grandmother, who had begun to feel exceedingly alarmed by her absence.

"Explain to your grandchild, madame," said the old gentleman, with a caustic severity of phrase, which might hardly have been expected from one of his singularly mild and benevolent appearance, "that we are a commercial people, and have no idea of giving more than is asked for anything, however important. Six days in the week we keep for ourselves, the sev-

enth we give to God. 'Tis what He Himself demanded, and we stick to our agreement. We are too business-like to do more than is necessary; it would be a waste of both time and capital."

The old gentleman spoke in a kind of jesting earnest, and Lady Oranmore felt so provoked both at the truth and freedom of his words, that she did not thank him, perhaps, quite so graciously as she might otherwise have done. The reserve did not seem at all to afflict him, however; he patted Perletta on the head, shook Agnese by the hand, and, in reply to her little speech of gratitude, uttered in Italian, but made quite intelligible by its tone and manner, he only answered:

"It is nothing, my child—absolutely nothing; only as you are a Papist, and do not belong to this mercantile people, perhaps you had better go back to the land from whence you came. I am told you can there waste your time in the churches all the day long, if you like it; if, indeed, waste of time it be, to bestow it on Him who is Lord of time as well as of eternity."

He laid his hand on her head as he spoke, in token of farewell; and the action recalled Francesco so vividly to her mind, that Agnese burst into tears. The stranger cast one more glance of compassion upon her, bowed to Lady Oranmore, and abruptly quitted the room. As soon as he had fairly closed the door, the latter tried to make Agnese comprehend the inutility of seeking for open churches in England upon any day but Sunday. Had she told her the sun had left the heavens, the blind child would probably have been infinitely less astounded. To all her ladyship's arguments as to the necessity of attending to business, the duty men owed to themselves and their children of unceasing toil from morning until night, Agnese only answered:

"Then *He* is left alone, no one to pray to *Him* all the week long! no one to worship *Him*; no one to love *Him*; and yet, *He* is there only that we may love Him and speak to Him quite at our ease."

Lady Oranmore felt at last she was only wasting her rhetoric; she had ceased to argue, and endeavored to console the weeping child by assuring her that, on their arrival at Oranmore Castle, she would take her to the village church which she had always been in the habit of attending herself, and in which on Sundays, at least, she might pray all the day long, if she liked it. Agnese did not seem quite so enchanted with this assurance as her ladyship expected; in fact, she began to doubt seriously as to the nature of her grandmother's religion. The prediction of Francesco appeared on the point of fulfilment, and she felt it was not, perhaps, in vain that he had required her so solemnly to promise to be faithful to Jesus even unto death. How far she was right in her conjectures my readers already know; but, although Lady Oranmore had fully resolved upon changing the religion of her grandchild, she yet shrunk from inflicting the pain which she felt such a resolution would cause to its object. The possibility of Agnese's resisting her authority never, for an instant, occurred to her mind. "Such a mere child," thought she; "what on earth difference can it make to her?" And yet, something in her own heart told her there was a difference—a difference which she had felt herself—a difference which would be yet more distasteful to the feelings of Agnese, than she was forced sometimes to acknowledge she had found it to her own. She determined, therefore, to do nothing in a hurry, but to wait until Agnese's Italian recollections had faded away, and until her young heart should have been chilled into indifference by the absence of all the sight and ceremonial of the Catholic Church—which she fancied had nursed it into its fervent religion—before venturing to propose a new form to its worship. She little knew the strength of the mind, young as it was, with which she had to deal; still less did she comprehend the enduring character of that faith which had early stamped itself on Agnese's heart, for she felt that she herself at the same age had been totally without any fixed religious principle of any kind, and that, at the bare instigation of a superior, she would have gone quite willingly to any church, chapel, or meeting-house in the land. With such a recollection in her own heart, it was not difficult

to argue herself into a belief in the growing indifference of Agnese—a supposition, certainly, in some degree countenanced by the quiet way in which the latter received the customary Sunday speech of "We cannot go to church to-day, Agnese; the weather is too cold, or too damp, or too foggy. Remember we are not in Italy, dear child." Poor Agnese! she remembered it all too well; but she also had taken her resolution "to wait and see;" and strong in her determination of passive resistance, she suffered nothing of this bitter recollection to be visible in her manner as she left Lady Oranmore's presence, and sought in the solitude of her own little turret-chamber spiritually to unite herself to the various services of her Church.

After the accomplishment of this first beloved and, for her, daily duty, there was nothing the lonely child loved so well as to ramble by the sea-shore, under the guidance of Perletta, or to sit and muse away the hours on the sunny spot which she had chosen for her summer seat among the cliffs. I know not by what secret instinct she was led, yet certain it is that she chose the holiest spot in all the country round, and one which the peasant never passed but with bare head and reverent mien, for the scene of her lonely meditations. And it was fair as it was holy; lovely even in its ruins was the little church which crowned the cliffs, and looked down, in its calm sanctity, on the broad waters of the Atlantic, beating idly and angrily against the rocks below; lovelier, still, if possible, the quiet cemetery by which it was surrounded, and in which every wild flower the country-side could boast of seemed to have made for itself a garden—primrose, and violet, and wood anemone, and wild sorrel clustering among its tombs in rich abundance, and contrasting their scentless blossoms with the sweet flowers of the May, and the meadow-sweet, and that white wild rose which is so fragrant and so fair, that though it blooms freely by the wayside, is not out of place in the garden of a monarch. Agnese could not see them, but the summer's breeze often reminded her of their presence; and something there was in their soft perfume, recalling the orange-scented groves of her native Italy, and bidding her dream sweet dreams of the land, which now, more than ever, she deemed the land of Jesus. She did not know that a church, where once He dwelt upon the altar, was close at hand, or that her favorite resting-place was a tombstone, beneath which, perchance some village saint lay buried. But there was a holy stillness ever resting on the spot, which soothed her spirits; and so, by degrees she came here oftener, and lingered longer, until the servants learned to seek her, whenever she was missing, among the ruins of St. Bride's; and the very country people came to call her lowly resting-place among its tombs, the summer seat of Lady Oranmore's blind child. Here she nursed in her soul that deep thought which Lady Oranmore fancied had disappeared, only because it was no longer visible on the surface, but which, in truth, became all the deeper, now that it could no longer flow forth into the observance of religion. Had she remained in Italy, in the free exercise of her religion and under the guidance of its ministers, thought would have resolved into action, and action would have been made pleasant and sanctified by thought. As it happened, her life became one uninterrupted meditation; and a state of things so unnatural to one of her tender years soon told its tale upon her bodily health. She had not been three months at Oranmore before there seemed every probability that the observation of Francesco would be realized in her regard, and that the flower would early fall which had been forced into premature bloom and sweetness. Lady Oranmore watched the vivid flush on the cheek, and the strange brightness of the eye, and she trembled for the life of her darling; but she could not penetrate the secret of her malady; she had not sufficient sense of religion herself to be able to comprehend how its deprivation might affect a mind which like Agnese's, had fed on it from infancy. She knew not how the daily prayer of the blind child was for the dove that it might descend—how her nightly dream was of the dove, that it had descended. Neither did she see the bitter tears in which she was accustomed to indulge, when believing herself alone and unwatched in her

lonely rambles on the cliffs. One there was, however, not quite so ignorant of Agnese's sorrow—one, ever hovering near her and around her, even when the child fancied herself alone; and sometimes a light step in the grass, or a sigh, or a long drawn breath, almost betrayed the presence of this invisible guardian. This had occurred so frequently of late, that by degrees a kind of mysterious awe began to mingle with her musings; she never felt as if she was quite alone. It was always as though a spirit were lingering near; and one evening (it surely could not have been her fancy) she even imagined a sweet low voice pronounced her name: "Agnese!"

Trembling violently, she started to her feet, but no answer was returned to her eager questions, only she thought she heard a deeper sigh, and then a receding footstep, and then all was once more silent as the grave. Agnese sat down again, for she felt she could not stand, and her heart throbbed so wildly that she almost fancied she could hear it beating; a few minutes afterwards she was once more startled by the sound of her own name, but this time it was Lady Oranmore, who came to tell her that the next day, being Sunday, she would take her if she liked, to divine service at the church of Oranmore. Agnese listened, but she was not glad, and she thanked her, but it was mechanically. There was no real joy in her words and feelings. She did not feel sure Lady Oranmore was a Catholic, and it was therefore with depressed spirits and trembling heart that she prepared the next morning to accompany her to church.

If ever our angel-guardians give warning of the presence of danger, as I devoutly believe they often do, by their secret inspirations, to the innocently unconscious, Agnese received such a warning in the hour when she stepped over the threshold of that church. She felt as if the very air were too heavy for her breathing. The service had commenced already, she paused for a moment, in hopes of catching those dear, familiar sounds to which she had listened from her childhood, until it almost seemed as if she understood them by mere force of intimacy with their terms. Alas! the language that now met her ear was not the language of the Mass, by which the Catholic is made equally at home in the observances of his religion, whether he attends them in the wigwam of the savage Indian or the cathedral of the civilized European. It was not the language of the Mass, and the words of Francesco flashed upon her memory.

"No! no! not here!" she said, quick as lightning, resisting the hand which urged her into the well-cushioned pew of the Oranmore family. "Under the lamp! under the lamp! It is there I ever pray the best!" "There is no lamp here," said Lady Oranmore, thrown off her guard by the suddenness of the request, and closing the door of the pew, into which she had now drawn her grandchild almost by force. Agnese heard, and for one brief instant there was a struggle such as seldom occurs more than once in the life of a human being, but which, sometimes earlier, sometimes later, is almost sure, not only to come at last, but to be made, far oftener than we imagine, the turning-point at which the happiness or misery of an eternity is decided.

"What will Lady Oranmore say? what will the people think?" It was so her human nature questioned; and in truth it required something of the faith and courage of a martyr to brave the scrutiny of the hundred eyes that would be fixed upon her if she attempted to leave the church. But it must be done—no Latin Mass, no lamp. Jesus was neither in the church nor of it, and not another instant might the Little Bride of the Blessed Sacrament kneel before an altar where He was not. One prayer to Him—one word to Perletta, and, before Lady Oranmore could interpose to prevent it, the pew door was unfastened, and the long length of the church traversed with a steady heart, although it must be acknowledged a most uncertain footstep. Up to this point Agnese had managed to restrain herself to a walk; but no sooner had she gained the portals of the building, than, yielding to the fear of being pursued, she shook the ribbon round Perletta's neck, and set off at a rapid pace towards her summer seat upon the

cliffs. There, casting herself on her face, she burst into tears; by degrees, however, her agitation subsided, and she fell fast asleep, yet even in her dreams the scene of the morning was not absent from her imagination, and more than once she murmured half aloud: "Jesus is not here; where is He, then? my God, my God, where is He?" "Jesus once was here," said a sweet, low voice in her ear. Agnese started up, fancying at first the words to be only a portion of her own dream. But now she was wide awake, and still the plaintive melody of that voice was heard. "Time was that He was here, and yonder church was His house and home. But sacrilegious feet have defiled that sanctuary, and sacrilegious hands have overturned the altar, and now the thistle and wild nettle grow, and the fox has made for itself a home, even here where He once dwelt in the very sacrament of His love for man."

"Where am I? where am I?" said Agnese, scarcely able to believe her own ear, and tempted to fancy she was again in Italy, or dreaming of it, so familiar were the thoughts of the invisible speaker, and so familiar the soft Italian in which those thoughts were uttered. "Where are you?" returned the voice. "In the churchyard of lone St. Bride's—on the very spot where, if tradition tells the truth, St. Patrick built his first altar, and said his first Mass in the land of Erin."*

"Then I am close to the church of Jesus, and I knew it not," said the wondering child.

"To what was once the church of Jesus. The church is now in ruins; and they who have made it so have run a public road right among the tombs of the desecrated dead. Well! well! nature has been more considerate than man, as they say she ever is in this land, and so she has made the holy resting-place of our fathers beautiful in flowers, some of the pale blossoms she has garnered here even vieing, methinks, in beauty with the fairest that you know of in your own fair land."

Agnese was too much lost in astonishment to answer; and after a moment's pause, the invisible went on:

"Would that you could see them! The crowds of primroses; the clusters of white roses; the delicate little harebell; the wood anemone; and that other, the wild sorrel—the fairest flower that grows, to my mind—'lady-flower,' I would name it, if I had my way; it is so fragile and so fair that it looks like to Mary, and ought to be called after her. There, I have gathered some of each for you, and they shall be to you as a relic of this holy spot, where (so the poor people say) no worm or creeping thing is ever found, to defile the slumbers of the dead below, or to mar the beauties of the flowers above."

"Come hither," said Agnese; "I am blind, and I cannot see; but if you are not the guardian spirit of these tombs, come hither, and take my hand in yours and lay my head upon your bosom, and speak to me of Jesus. Never have I heard anyone speak of Him as you do, since the day I left the land where He is everywhere, and everywhere people love Him."

Agnese felt the unknown draw near; and the hand that was laid on hers was small, and soft, and delicate, evidently the hand of a girl, and a very young girl too.

"Neither a spirit, nor yet of Italy, am I," the voice replied; "although I use its language."

"Not of Italy!" said the blind child, sadly. "Then you know not of its churches, where the lamp ever burns, and where Jesus ever dwells."

"Do I not?" said the voice, with a sudden quickness. "To what purpose, then, have I listened so often to tales of that fair land, and of one sweet saint who sleeps among its flowers?"

There was something inexpressibly mournful in its tones, as it added, after a moment's pause:

"My child, no blood of Italy is flowing through these veins; yet I have dreamed of it so often that it seems to me as if the kingdoms of the earth were set in array before me I could choose it out among all the rest; and oh! believe me, I should choose the fairest."

"And the holiest," said Agnese, eagerly.

* Tradition in the north of Ireland.

"I know not that. It is holy, indeed, to cling to the thought of Jesus, as they do in your land; but holier still, to suffer persecution for His sake; and that is what we do in ours."

"Halloa, young woman," cried another voice; "saw you ever a man pass this way within the last half-hour?"

The new speaker was a hard-looking, elderly man, standing on the other side of a hedge and deep ditch which separated him from the churchyard. He spoke in Irish, probably imagining he would be more easily understood in that language; but Agnese's unknown companion answered him in English; and the voice, so lately full of plaintive melody, was now as clearly expressive of cold contempt as were the words it uttered.

"Squire Netterville is early in the field this fine Sunday morning. Well, the better day the better deed, I suppose. And what may be the present game—a rebel or a priest?"

"If it were a rebel, I need not go much farther," returned the surly voice, in the same language in which he had been addressed. "Every Papist is alike a croppy—man, woman and child—all tarred with the same brush."

"True; and not very extraordinary either. When the brush is in such clumsy hands as Squire Netterville's, no wonder we all take a touch of the tar. Why, they say the very parson in your fine church up yonder is not altogether free of taint. To be sure he is only a wolf in sheep's clothing—a cowardly renegade—so Squire Netterville will know how to excuse him."

"Will you give an answer to my question, or shall I jump over the hedge and thrash one out of you?" roared the man, stung to the quick by the biting sarcasm of the speaker.

"Mother of heaven!" burst from the lips of the terrified Agnese, who now pretty well understood English, the language in which the conversation was kept up: but her companion only answered:

"To thrash a woman! Truly it would be a deed worthy of Squire Netterville's ancient fame."

"See if I don't, then," cried the man, stepping back a few paces, and taking a flying leap at the hedge. Unluckily for him, however, he missed his footing, and tumbled hopelessly into the ditch, from whence he emerged in a very deplorable condition, covered with mud, and not altogether free of blood, drawn from him by the thorns and briars which had saluted his descent.

The ironical laugh of his tormentress rang through the air.

"Squire Netterville has dirtied his coat; but, if report speaks true, it is not the first time he has daubed his escutcheon *by a fall*."

Squire Netterville was busy at the moment in brushing the mud off his coat; but he looked up scarlet at this wicked allusion to his apostasy, and shook his horsewhip in the air. Suddenly, however, changing his intention, he caught Agnese roughly by the arm.

"Here, you beggar's brat, take this *fi-penny*, and tell me whether you saw anybody pass this way of late."

"I am blind, sir; I cannot see," cried the terrified child, trembling from head to foot beneath his grasp.

"You lie, you young rebel!" growled the savage, with a terrible oath, whirling his horsewhip at the same time so close round the head of the shrinking child, that it lifted her curls from her brow. Twice he repeated this manœuvre; but the third time it would have descended in right earnest had not some one suddenly flung her arms round Agnese, and received on her own person the blow that was intended for hers. It was her invisible friend who thus interposed in her behalf; and she was a young girl, not, perhaps, more than sixteen years of age. Yet was there no sign of fear on her flushed cheek or in the proud eye which she fixed upon the squire. He himself seemed to quail for a moment beneath its steady gaze.

"Squire Netterville surpasses himself this morning," she said; and it was impossible for human voice to convey deeper abhorrence than hers expressed at that moment. "To hunt an old man as if he were a mad dog, is not enough for a zeal like his; he would set the seal on his good deeds by the murder of an innocent child."

"You have seen him, then. Now, hark ye, young mistress! if you will not tell me which way he took, I will leave a mark upon you which you shall carry with you to your grave."

"You have done that already," said the girl, drawing one hand across her brow, from which the blood was flowing rapidly.

"I will do it again, then, if you don't choose to answer my question."

"Now, look you, Squire Netterville," the girl answered proudly, "and mark what I say. I might pretend I didn't know the man for whom you are looking, or that I hadn't seen him; but I scorn the poor evasion. I do know him; and I have seen him; and I know which way he went, and where he is at this moment. And now, if you flog me alive for it, you shall not get another word from me about him."

"I will flog you alive—both of you," shouted Netterville. "Here, you little wretch," he cried, shaking Agnese by the arm; "have you found your tongue yet, or do you want a cut of the whip to make you speak?"

"I am blind! I am blind!" screamed the child, clinging with all her might to her self-elected champion.

"Peace, child; he shall not harm you," said the latter.

"Shan't I though—shan't I?" vociferated Netterville, lifting up his whip, and making a cut in the air, which, however, fell short of its object, and descended right upon Perletta, who had sprung up on hearing the screams of her mistress.

"Curse the brute—it spoiled my aim," said the savage, dealing at the same time a kick at poor Perletta, which sent her flying through the air. "Here, Rover! Rover!" he added, whistling, and making a well-known sign to the fierce blood-hound by which he was accompanied.

"Do not set the dog, Squire Netterville, do not set the dog. It will destroy the poor beast," said Agnese's defender earnestly, stooping as if to pick up something from the ground.

"That's what I intend him to do. Here, Rover, have at him, my boy—have at him!" said Netterville, patting the blood-hound encouragingly on the back.

"You will have it, then," retorted the girl.

And still holding Agnese with one hand, she drew the other suddenly back, and flung a heavy stone at the dog before the squire could interpose to prevent her. Never was stone sent with a truer aim or better will; it hit the savage beast right in the eye; and howling with pain, and half blinded in his own gore, Rover rushed ingloriously from the field of battle. Netterville uttered a fearful imprecation.

"If you have injured him, I will wring your head off your shoulders; any how, I will teach you what it is to meddle with my dog, my young mistress."

And half beside himself with passion, it is hard to say what he would not, indeed, have done to his daring antagonist, had not another man shouted out from the other side of the hedge.

"What are you doing here, squire? Why, the priest was down on the beach half-an-hour ago; one of our people saw him sneaking about. There, let the children alone. If you have a score to wipe out with them, it will keep for another time, I suppose."

"Ay, ay; it will keep," said the squire, with a brutal laugh. "And I am not the man to forget it either. You are down in my book for a drubbing; mind that, you she croppy," he added, scowling terribly at Agnese's defender, while he turned to the blind child herself with something like an awkward attempt at good nature.

"There, little one, I suppose you are blind as you say; so pick up that *fi-penny* yonder, and buy a plaster for your dog."

"Touch it not, child," said the young unknown, fearlessly and authoritatively to Agnese—"touch it not! The coin of the blood-hunter can bring you nothing but sorrow. And you, bad man, take back your money and enjoy it while you may, the curse of the widow and orphan is on it; and the day is coming when the wealth so won in crime will heap shame, and woe, and degradation, and fruitless tears, and vain repentance

on your head. And now, why are you so still? and why do you stare so wildly? Away! away! the chase is onward, and the prey escapes while you linger here."

The squire did, indeed, stare wildly at her; but the man who had come to seek him having, by this time, cleared the ditch rather more successfully than he had done himself, took his arm and drew him rapidly down the mountain path.

"Do not cry, dear child—do not cry," said the girl to Agnese, her voice resuming all its former tenderness of tone; "they are quite out of sight now; and the dog is not much hurt, and will, I am sure, be able to lead you safely to the castle."

"Oh, do not leave me?" cried Agnese; "I dare not go home without you."

"Well, then," said the other, a little reluctantly, "I will walk with you as far as the gates of the avenue."

But when they had reached this point, Agnese clung to her still, and cried so piteously that, almost in her own despite, she was forced to proceed with her to the castle. Lady Oranmore met them on the steps, and nearly forgot Agnese's bold secession from the church in terror at the vision of her pale face and the blood-stained forehead of her companion.

"It is nothing," said this last in answer to her ladyship's horror-stricken looks; "at least, nothing but what they may look for, who find themselves abandoned to the tender mercies of Squire Netterville."

"Netterville again!" cried Lady Oranmore. "What wickedness is that man plotting now?"

"Nothing new, madam," said she; and the girl's kindling eye strangely contradicted the assumed nonchalance of her manner. "Only plying his ancient trade more vigorously than ever—hunting priests and Papists from land to water, and from water to land, as if they had only been sent by Providence to serve as otters or wild foxes for his especial amusement."

Lady Oranmore shuddered. She had once detested priests and Papists as much as Squire Netterville himself; but of late her thoughts on the subject had been rapidly changing. She made no direct reply, however, although she kindly, and almost affectionately, joined Agnese in her entreaties to her unknown protectress, that she would come in and suffer the wound on her forehead to be properly cared for. They were both refused with a look of proud embarrassment, which Lady Oranmore took at first, for natural timidity; so she would listen to no excuse, hurrying her guest with a kind of good-natured violence into the castle hall, and from thence to her own private sitting-room, to which none but her especial favorites ever found admittance. The blood rushed into the stranger's face as she crossed the threshold; and for a moment she stood gazing so silently around her, that Lady Oranmore might have again have fancied her overcome by shyness, had not something in her look and attitude contradicted her idea. In spite of her shabby dress—for, to say the truth, the close, black gown she wore was both old and faded, and deserving of no better title—in spite, too, of her blood-stained features, and the uncouth bandage which she herself had wrapped around her forehead—the girl still looked as if to tread the hall of princes was no new thing to her.

She was thinking (that was plain,) but not of the splendors by which she was surrounded, although it might be of some distant memory to which they were associated; for she sighed deeply, and there was a look of sad pleasure mingled with the pain expressed upon her most speaking features.

"I have never seen you before," cried Lady Oranmore, suddenly; "yet is your face familiar to me as if I had known you from your mother's arms."

The girl sighed more deeply than before; and withdrawing her eyes slowly from an arm-chair of antique fashion, on which they had been a long time riveted, fixed them steadily on the speaker's face, and said, after a moment's pause:

"Have you never felt that before, Lady Oranmore? Have you never found a conversation—a turn of thought—a mere word, perhaps, come upon your ear as if it were the echo of

one long listened to before? it is so, likewise, with pictures and with landscapes, and it may well be with faces also. We look upon them as if they had been with us in a dream."

"Strange girl!" cried Lady Oranmore; "what is your name?"

"Grace," answered her visitant, shortly, and with emphasis.

"Grace what?—you have another, I suppose."

"I have no other, lady; or, if I ever had, they have taken it away—they who hate us for our race and for our country—but yet more, thanks be to God, for our religion."

"You are a Catholic, then, and have suffered for your faith?"

"I have suffered in the person of those I loved. My father had a brother, who, being of the law religion, the law gave him the right to dispossess his elder of his fortune. He had no scruples in his conscience—no kindness in his heart to deter him from the deed—and so he did it; and the poorest tenant on the land was on that day a richer man than he who, a few hours before, had been lord of all."

"Good God, whose child are you?" cried Lady Oranmore, in great agitation, catching the speaker by the arm.

"The child of oppression, madam."

"But you are so like—your story is so like"—faltered Lady Oranmore.

"Like the story of many another crushed heart and fallen race in this unhappy land," the stranger coldly rejoined. "Nay, if fame speaks rightly, lady, even among your own kith and kin such things have happened."

Lady Oranmore dropped the arm she held, and breathed a long-drawn sigh.

"Stay with me, child," she said, at last. "If you have no home, no relation, no friend, you shall find all these in me."

Moved, it would seem, by a sudden impulse, the girl stepped forward, knelt down, and kissed Lady Oranmore's hand. There was nothing abject either in the look or manner with which this lowly action was performed, although there was something of humility (all the more touching, perhaps, for the proud heart from whence it came) mingling with the deep and passionate gratitude by which it was inspired.

"Stay with me," repeated Lady Oranmore, earnestly, as she felt the girl's warm tears falling on her hand.

"I thank you, madam, for the kind thought and the kind word; but God is good, and He has not left me friendless. And as for my home, it is better than His who had no spot whereon to lay His head; and so it is surely good enough for one who would fain, though she does not, follow in His footsteps."

"Indeed, but you do, though," said Agnese, for the first time joining in the conversation, "You bore the hard word and the hard blow for me this very day; and, surely, that is what He would have done—has done already for us all."

"No, I do not," said the girl, sadly; "He prayed for His persecutors; and, God help me! I little love the man who made me an orphan."

She kissed Agnese, and pressed Lady Oranmore's hand once more to her heart.

"May God keep you and guard you; and surely He Who would not break the bruised reed or quench the smoking flax, will give a blessing if even for your kindness this day to a nameless creature."

"Stay with me," Lady Oranmore once more whispered through her tears.

"I cannot, madam; I am wanted and waited for elsewhere. Yet pardon me if I add another word: it is about this child. Be not worse to her than Squire Netterville. He might strike the body—he could not harm the soul. You can, madam, and you will, if for her worldly interests you seek to warp her conscience. She is a Catholic; in God's name, let her remain a Catholic still."

"She shall," said Lady Oranmore.

"It is well, madam. And in His name I thank you, who said, in behalf of the little ones He loved so well—'He that shall scandalize one of these little ones that believe in Me, it were better for him that a millstone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be drowned in the depth of the sea.'"

CHAPTER IV.

Ave Mary! night is shielding
 In its darkness earth and sea—
 Yet, ere yet to slumber yielding,
 Lift we up our souls to thee.
 Forehead bent and wrinkled brow,
 Voice of age, and infancy,
 All are turned upon thee now—
 All are whispering prayer to thee!
 All, if not in careless gladness,
 Still 'mid thoughts that make it be
 Sweeter, far to share thy sadness,
 Than to smile apart from thee.
 Ave Mary! night is shielding
 In this darkness earth and sea—
 Yet, ere yet to slumber yielding,
 Lift we all our souls to thee.

"Sing to me again, dear Grace. Never have I heard music that I loved so well since the night poor Rosalie went up to heaven."

Agnese was seated, as usual, on her summer seat; but this time she was not alone. Her unknown defendress was at her side; for though she obstinately refused to return to Oranmore Castle, she often met the blind child upon the cliffs near to St. Bride's churchyard, and there she would sit or walk with her for hours, and sing her hymns, tell her tales of martyrs and of saints, and speak to her in tones so full of love and sweetness that, in her own despite, the latter was forced to confess the nameless Grace had become dearer to her than any one on earth besides—dearer than Lady Oranmore—than Francesco—or even, she hardly dared (it seemed so like ingratitude) to say it, than poor old Benita, the voluntary protectress of her forsaken infancy.

GRACE'S SONG.

O Erin, my country, beloved of the sea,
 Which clasps not an island more beautiful than thee!
 Shall I tell of thy glories, or weep for the day
 When, like snow in the sunshine they melted away?
 Or say, shall I sing of thy joy, when that sea
 Bore a saviour, a saint, and a apostle to thee;
 And, sole amid nations, thou beautiful isle!
 The cross that he preached was received with a smile?
 Yes! hallowed forever—thrice hallowed the spot—
 Where the blood of the martyr besprinkled it not;
 And religion was seen, for the first time below,
 Not a stain on her garments or shade on her brow.

"No; I cannot sing that; and it is not true now," said Grace, suddenly breaking off her song. "Woe is me! the cross has been well drenched in blood since the day when St. Patrick bore it in peaceful triumph through the land. Well, well! it is not we who have shed it; and it is better to be the children of persecution than its parent."

"Dearest Grace, how strange you are! One while so gentle and so sad—and then so—so—"

"So fiery and so passionate—is it so, my little sister?"

For by this affectionate appellation the Irish girl had, early in their acquaintance, learned to address Agnese.

"No! no! not quite that. But still you are a mystery; even Lady Oranmore says she cannot understand you."

"Lady Oranmore! what does she know of me?"

"Nothing; but she would give a good deal to know something. She says you have interested her strangely."

"And what says our little sister?" said Grace, playfully, and yet with a shade of anxiety in her manner.

"What can she say but that she loves you dearly, for your own sake and for the sake of the sweet hymns you sing; but most of all for the sake of Him whom you know and worship as she does herself."

"No; not quite as you do, dear Agnese; for you worship Him in His own spirit of meekness, while I bring Him but a proud and angry heart, which, God help me! I often find it difficult to subdue."

"But no one has done me any wrong, and so I have nothing to subdue; and, then, they say the blind are always patient."

And as ever happened when she alluded to her blindness, the voice of Agnese became so full of plaintive melody, you felt as if her soul was rather steeped in heavenly sweetness,

than herself grown calm in the endurance of her sorrow.

"I wish, then, I was blind," said her companion, quickly; "for then, perhaps, I should be patient also."

"There is a blindness for you also, Grace. If you choose to take it—close your eyes to yourself; open them to Jesus. Behold His sufferings if you will, but blind yourself to your own."

"And that is what I am trying to do; but then, see you, little sister, I am like a child playing at blind-man's-buff; I blind my eyes willingly, yet I cannot help sometimes taking a peep from under the bandage."

"But surely it is sweet to suffer for the sake of Jesus?"

"Yes, dear Agnese, in one's own person, very sweet to suffer," said Grace, eagerly, and there was no touch of human pride in the lofty enthusiasm of her look and tone. "Very sweet it is to say, and feel, I might be rich, and I am poor; I might move among the lofty of the land, and lo! I am a beggar, an outcast, a wanderer on its surface. My God," she added, rising from her seat, and looking like a beautiful inspiration, as she cast her eyes upward, and proceeded: "It is sweet to suffer thus for Thee; to suffer in oneself, and by oneself; but it is hard to endure it in those we love better than ourselves—harder still to look upon the man who did it, and not feel all one's human nature up in arms against him."

"And against yourself," suggested, Agnese, gently.

"And that is very true, my sweet Agnese. I feel my anger does deeper injury to myself than to my human foe."

"Forgive him, dearest Grace; perhaps of him also Jesus would have said, 'he knows not what he does.'"

For a moment the young girl looked as if she thought her foe man knew very well indeed what he was about; but she tried to shake off the feeling and the look, and then she said, with all the truth of her generous heart:

"From my very soul I do forgive him, and morning and evening I pray for him; and not for him alone, but for all (and their name is legion) who have done us wrong."

"You pray—ah! dearest Grace, where do you pray? How often have I asked in vain this question, and yet Lady Oranmore says there is no law now against the free exercise of religion."

"No, Agnese, but there is one against large assemblies of people. You know rebellion is rife through the land, and our doughty militia-men are not always so discriminating as to make it certain they would not mistake for a political meeting, one solely intended for the purpose of worship."

"But surely not, if it were held in a church."

"Church! church!" repeated Grace, impatiently; "I tell you we have not a church left standing within twenty miles; and when we do meet to pray, it must be by the hillside, or the seashore, or in the fields, or the caverns of the islands. Church! church! Come with me, and I will show you how, in the beginning, they treated such of our churches, as they thought it not worth their while to steal; and then, little sister mine, you will no longer wonder if a church has become a kind of religious luxury, to which in this part of the island we are as yet almost strangers."

She took Agnese's hand and led her by a rocky path up to a ruin, perched picturesquely enough on the very brow of the hill.

"See here, Agnese; but I forget, you cannot see. Well, these ruined, blackened walls around us were once a church."

"A church—a real, real church!" cried Agnese, with a look of most joyful surprise.

"A real church," repeated Grace; "and you may kiss the ground, Agnese, for once it was steeped in the blood of martyrs. A hundred years ago, or more," she continued, "and this was a stately building. Neither art nor labor had been spared in its erection. Perhaps like the Israelites of old, men gave their time and talents—women, their ornaments of gold and silver, their bracelets, their costly stuffs, purple and fine linen, for the enrichment of a temple to the living God. They built it for themselves, and by themselves; and so, good, easy folk, they thought they had a right to worship in it as they

pleased. They were mistaken, however, and so they discovered to their cost. It was early on a Sunday morning, and the blue waters of the Atlantic flashed and glimmered beneath the rising sun, and the white cliffs looked whiter still, and the very flowers seemed to spring more gladly from the turf, as if rejoicing in the glories of the summer tide. It was Sunday morning, and thousands came thronging down from the mountains, and thousands came flocking up from the valleys; every cabin gave its quota of inhabitants, men and women and children, infants even in their mothers' arms, to swell the living tide which poured towards the newly-erected church upon the cliffs: and happy young hearts were among them, and happy old ones too, I dare say, for the bishop was to be there that morning, and to give, in the sacrament of Confirmation, the strength so needed for the storm of persecution which just then had begun to sweep over the land. Some few there might perhaps even be, who came to receive the rite, after having wept and done penance over former vacillations from the faith; but the holy chrism would be also poured over brows from whence sin had not yet dashed the innocent dews of their baptism, for, in those days of uncertainty and tribulation, children, almost infants by their age, were often admitted to confirmation, either that they might not die without it, or that they might derive from it the courage they were often called upon to exert, even in their tenderest years. The church was, therefore, crowded. Within it there was peace, and love, and hope, and prayer!—without it!—but I must not anticipate. Enough, that information had been given of the bishop, the Mass, and the holy rite; and suddenly, in one of the pauses of the service, a sound, the well-known tramp of soldiery, was heard. People began to listen in breathless silence—the bishop ceased to speak—the bell was rung no longer, and still the sounds without grew louder—the tramp, tramp, tramp, more distinct upon the turf. At length it seemed almost under the walls, and then it ceased, and the shrill notes of a bugle rang through the air. Some one looked forth from the window! Mother of God! the Cromwellians were upon them! They were unarmed, therefore they did not think to fight, neither did they seek to fly. They knew their doom too well. There was no hope for them beyond the church; so they barricaded the doors, and crowded round the altar, where mercy alone might be found for them. Now mark you, Agnese, if these men were rebels, the soldiers might have broken open the doors, dispersed the people, or taken them to prison; or if they were wild beasts, they might have fired in at the window, and, packed and caged as they were, ten rounds of shot would have sent them to their doom. But they were neither rebels nor wild beasts—they were simply Papists. Prison would have been too easy, and such a death too speedy. There was a better vengeance in the heads and hearts of Cromwell's band of ruffians. Higher than door or window they piled up wood and hay, and straw, and every combustible thing they could lay their hands on, and with a wild shout of triumph, set the whole of it in a blaze. The red light upon the windows soon told the fell deed to those within. At first they sat gazing upon one another, like men stupefied by terror, and then, as if moved by one simultaneous impulse, they all knelt down at the feet of their bishop; men and women imploring absolution, children, so lately full of childish joy, now screaming and struggling, and clinging to his feet. Good old man! he wept over them and blessed them; but tears might not quench that funeral pile! The windows soon melted away in the heat, and then the red fire poured rapidly in, flying like a living creature along the walls, taking the rafters of the ceiling, licking up everything it found that might give its fury food, until the soldiery without no longer seemed so terrible as the circling flames within, and half mad with heat, and smoke, and terror, the miserable victims sought escape by flight. And now a terrible scene ensued, as it has been described by one who shared in its barbarities; wretches scorched and burned, and blackened, beyond the semblance of human beings, shouting, screaming, raving in their madness, the mighty crowd swaying hither and thither in its various efforts

at escape, as some rushed to the gateway (the doors had long since been burned to cinders), and others clambered up to the windows to cast themselves down, and each and all were driven back into the pitiless flames at the point of the yet more pitiless soldier's lance. At length the shout and the scream were heard no more, and silence fell on the multitude—the silence of despair; and then the bishop rose: he had hitherto remained prostrate at the foot of the altar, and over the dead and the dying the faithful shepherd looked. They knew him in the midst of their agony and fear; they knew him, and guessing his intention, bowed down their heads to receive his absolution. They were spoken—those words which gave them hopes of the peace in heaven they had never known on earth; and then the bishop once more lifted up his arms to impart his final benediction, and in this attitude, and while yet the words were quivering on his lips, he fell down dead before them. In an instant afterwards, the whole of the building gave way with a terrible crash, and all was over.

"This is the tradition of the country; it is but one tale amid a thousand others, and it has been repeated, even in these our days of enlightened civilization. Not twenty miles from these very ruins, and not three months from the hour in which you have listened to this story, three Catholic chapels have been burned to the ground, by men who write themselves worthy descendants of Cromwell's ruthless soldiers. And now, dear Agnese, see you not how our forefathers were forced to worship God in secret and in lonely places, and can you wonder if we, their children, have often neither hearts nor means left to do otherwise than they did?"

"Dear Grace," said Agnese, "I could almost fancy I was listening to a tale of the old Christian martyrs."

"The martyrs of the old Christian times were better off than we. They suffered for their faith, and their very foes denied them not their crown, Verily! Verily! ours have been wiser in their generation. They have robbed us of the glory of our martyrdom, to clothe us in its shame. True, they persecute us as Papists, but then it is as rebels that they hang us. It was so in England also. They did not put a man to torture and to death for being a Catholic, but only for refusing an oath which no Catholic could in conscience take."

"And yet, at Oranmore Castle, I have heard them talk so often as if we were the persecutors, and they the persecuted," replied Agnese.

"Yes, poor, injured lambs!" said Grace, laughing through her tears. "They preach liberty of conscience, and then show us fire and faggot when we dare to take it; yet I ought not to grumble at these laws, for they made a Catholic of my grandfather."

"I should have thought they would have kept him Protestant."

"They did not, however. He was travelling for the first time through the north, for he had been educated in England, and he came suddenly upon a vast assemblage of people hearing Mass in an open field, every man bare-headed and upon his knees, although the mud was deep beneath, and the rain descending in torrents from above. He went home and became a Catholic, for he said there could be no true religion upon earth, if the faith which produced such fruits were false."

"I do not wonder," said Agnese. "Oh, that I also might be present at such a scene!"

"Dear Agnese! I have told you why, just now, we fear to meet in public. There is yet another reason. The priest, the only one now left in this immediate district, has most unjustly become suspected as a rebel and a favorer of rebellion, and informations to this respect have been lodged against him."

"But he is not—he cannot be a rebel!" cried Agnese.

"Far from it. He holds rebellion in abhorrence, as a foul offence against the laws both of God and man; and it is mainly owing to his influence that the people about here have been kept from joining in the wild cry of vengeance, which, north and south, and east and west, is sweeping through the land. He knows this, and therefore he has rejected many an opportunity of escape which has offered itself, to foreign shores,

He will not even give up his ministry among them, though the mere fact of saving Mass to some hundreds of people must lead in the end to an unfortunate discovery. The very first day I met you, Squire Netterville was almost on his track; and if I had not kept him in play by my idle chatter, the father would have been caught long before he reached the cave where, woe is me! he is forced to find a home."

"Ah! that is the reason that you were so saucy and so brave," said Agnese, smiling.

"Yes, Agnese! but do you know I got a scolding afterwards? The father said I had no right to do evil that good might come of it, or to work up the wild passions of the man to frenzy, even to save a priest's neck from the hangman's rope; so you see I had my horsewhipping for nothing after all, Agnese."

"For nothing except the pleasure of saving him, dear Grace."

"Ah! that was a pleasure, and to see the squire tumble into the ditch, too, was an agreeable little diversion of its kind," said Grace, laughing merrily. "But it is all in vain; he is saving hundreds from the certain death which is ever the consequence of rebellion, but his own will be sacrificed in the effort. Well! well! we must not repine. The good shepherd gives his life for his flock, and if there ever was a good shepherd, Padre Francesco is the man."

"Francesco! is that his name?" said Agnese, a whole host of recollections rushing upon her mind—"but not my Francesco," she added with a sigh—"he is not a priest."

"Like myself, he is without a name, but we call him Francesco, because he was ordained in Italy, and that was the name he took in the religious order to which he belongs. And now, see you not, little sister, what a dilemma I am in? I would trust you as myself, but I fear, if I take you to our rock-cave chapel, Lady Oranmore may miss you, and her servants track you out."

"I see," said Agnese, "and I must submit." She covered her face with her hands, and tears from her sightless eyes trickled slowly through her fingers.

"My child, my child," cried her companion, "I cannot bear to see you weep; you are unhappy dear Agnese."

"How can I be otherwise, so far from my own dear land, in the very bosom of which the sweet Jesus dwells, and what is there for the blind child but Jesus? You have the flowers and the fruits, and the bright blue skies, the stormy waters, and the pleasant earth—but Jesus is all in all to me. My God and my all! my present consolation and my future joy! Oh, that the dove would descend and give Him to my prayers?"

"You shall have Him," cried Grace, suddenly; "weep no more, my own Agnese, but meet me to-morrow in St. Bride's church-yard."

"Ah! no, dear Grace, not for worlds would I endanger the safety of the father of the flock."

"It will not be endangered," said Grace. "I have thought of all; go to Lady Oranmore; tell her all I have said to you. Say to her that I know her to be honor itself; and that our secret will be safe in her keeping; and tell her furthermore, that the life of your nearest relative upon earth is involved in this confidence, for the priest is your uncle, Agnese, the brother of your father; and, Mother of God! I can keep the secret no longer—I am your sister." The words had scarcely burst from her lips before Agnese was in her arms, and for a long time the young sisters, so long separated and so strangely re-united, wept together in silence. "Yes, dear Agnese," said Grace, at last speaking through her tears, "that tall, grave-looking man, who rescued you from the crowd at Dover, and who would not speak Italian lest his own mission should be endangered by any discovery of his calling, was your father's brother. After the persecution which drove your father and my father, Agnese from his native land, this brother, who being next in age, might have claimed the property had he chosen to change his religion, resolved on the contrary, upon renouncing the little that was left him, and becoming a priest, in hopes of supplying the spiritual wants of the poor

tenants of Netterville. Before, however, he went to Italy," continued Grace Netterville, yielding to the gay humor which often found her even in her tears, "this good uncle of mine resolved on committing a petty robbery—"

"Robbery!" cried Agnese, with a look of horror.

"Yes, robbery," said her companion, laughing outright. "But I believe he could not have been hanged for sheep-stealing, seeing that it was only a poor lamb that he abstracted."

"But what good could the theft of a lamb do him, Grace?"

"Not much good to him, certainly, but a great deal of good to the poor animal itself: I was the lamb, Agnese. He foresaw that my grandmother, Lady Oranmore, would bring me up in the religion of the worldly wise; so, one day, when I was playing in the shrubbery, he pounced like a great eagle upon me, and bore me in his talons to a convent in Italy, where I remained for many years; and he was bringing me from thence when he stumbled upon his other niece at Dover. He did not then know who you were; but as Lady Oranmore made no secret of your story, he found it out soon after your arrival at Oranmore; and from the hour when he gave me to understand I had a sister, I haunted your footsteps, darling. I used to follow you along the cliffs, dreading, at every turn, lest you should miss your footsteps, and tumble over, and I be deprived of my little sister. And I used to sit beside you for hours in the churchyard of lone St. Bride's longing—to take you into my arms that I felt it quite impossible to address you coldly as a stranger. I followed you even to Lady Oranmore's church."

"Into her church?"

"To it; not into it, darling. And then, indeed, when I found your religion endangered, I resolved to speak out. I was even tempted to rob Lady Oranmore's sheepfold of another lamb; but your first words convinced me there was no need. A faith so vivid I had never seen; and I felt directly you were the stuff of which a martyr might be made, but an apostate never."

"But surely you named me once?"

"Yes," said Grace, laughing. "Like a baby with a new toy, I could not resist the pleasure of seeing how it would sound to talk to you; and so I tried to say your name just in the careless, commonplace sort of way in which I should have done if I had known you all my life. But, bless my soul? you jumped up and looked as frightened as if a ghost had spoken to you out of the grave you were sitting on. I declare I caught the infection, and ran away much faster than I should have done if a ghost, or Squire Netterville himself, had been at my heels."

"Squire Netterville! Grace, Grace! do you not know—?"

"I—yes, yes! I do know Agnese. He is the third of those ill-fated brothers—the renegade to his religion—the traitor to his blood—the blot on his escutcheon—the stain on the fair name of Netterville forever?"

"Hush, hush, dear Grace! remember he is our uncle."

"It is true; and I am silent. But how did you know that—or did you only guess?"

"Lady Oranmore told me long ago. And now, dear Grace—"

"Not Grace in earnest, sweet sister mine. I was called after my mother, and my name is May; but I thought it would cause Lady Oranmore to suspect me; and then, you know, May means Mary, and *she* was full of grace, and the mother of grace itself. So the name was not ill-chosen; only it did not suit me very well. Don't you think I ought to have called myself Graceless?"

"Indeed I don't," said Agnese earnestly; "and I was going to have told you, my gracious, graceful May, that I loved your invisible presence, long before you said a word to me. I used to feel as if my guardian angel was seated at my side."

"Not your angel, but your guardian only, dear one. And now, adieu until to-morrow. Meet me here at six o'clock, and I will bring you to an uncle something better than Squire Netterville, and a grandmother not better but full as good as Lady Oranmore."

"A grandmother, dear Grace?"

"Yes, Agnese; the mother of the three brothers is still alive. She had a high spirit and a noble heart; and when she found the part her youngest born had played in this domestic tragedy she sent him word that she would never look upon his face again. She would neither break the bread nor drink the cup with one who was a renegade to God—a traitor to his blood. So she shook the dust from off her feet, and went forth from the halls of Netterville forever."

"And then?" said Agnese.

"And then, like her eldest son, she sought first a refuge in the cottage of a peasant, but finally followed the fortunes of Francesco, in whom she has concentrated the affections she has taken from his brother. He is, indeed, her rich consolation for the disgrace which has fallen on her name. She loves him as a saint, reveres him as a martyr; and poor, and old, and paralytic as she is, she often says she is happier with her priestly son in his cave by the seashore than ever she was amid the rank and riches of her sunnier hours."

"And you, dear Grace? It makes me sad to think that you should have so poor a home while I, who have really been used to poverty from my childhood, am set at my ease in yonder castle."

"Console yourself, my own Agnese; the cottage or the cave, by the wild sea waves, is the home of my choice. When I asked to be allowed to leave my convent in order to nurse my dear old grandmother, my uncle represented to me the sort of life I would have to lead, and she herself wrote to dissuade me from the project. - But I answered almost in the words of Ruth: 'The land that shall receive thee dying, in the same will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so and so to me, and add more also, if aught but death part me and thee.' And never for an instant have I repented of my words. But my task is nearly over. She is very old now—broken down, perhaps, less by age than by the heavy sorrow which has come upon her through her children. Every day may be her last; and I almost pray that the last may be soon."

"She longs to see Jesus, I suppose," said Agnese, innocently.

"It is not that! It is not that!" said Grace Netterville, clenching her hand, and speaking through her closed teeth. "But he will soon be taken in their toils; and, once taken, will be executed by martial law—that is to say, without judge or jury, justice or mercy. They have marked him for their prey; and oh! how I trust she may be dead, if it be only one day or hour, before they have succeeded in hunting him to his doom. Think, Agnese, think what a blow for the mother's heart, to know that her second Cain has shed the blood of his brother Abel."

"Good God! Is it, then, Squire Netterville who is hunting down his brother?"

"It is, indeed, he who has lodged information of a rebel priest lurking in the neighborhood. But, O Agnese! cried Grace, speaking with a kind of agony in her voice and manner, "I would not do the man injustice; I do not believe he knows the wrong he is doing; I do not believe he knows him to be his brother; and sometimes I have half been moved to go to him and say, 'he for whom you are weaving the hangman's rope, is the son of your mother.' But then I dared not do it; I could not risk the life of the noble and the kind upon the chance repentance of such a man."

"O Grace, do not speak of him so proudly. His sin is terrible—but think how terrible his doom. He has cast off Jesus, and Jesus has abandoned him to the devices of his own heart—even to the unconscious seeking of his brother's blood."

"Terrible! terrible! it is indeed Agnese," said Grace; sitting down, and covering her face with both her hands.

"We will not speak proudly or harshly of him," the blind child continued, kneeling down, and taking Grace Netterville's hand in hers. "We will pity and forgive him; we will pray for him; we will even love him for the sake of the sweet Jesus who loved him once—who loves him, perhaps, even at this in-

stant, for the future penance by which he will repay the past sins of his life."

"Dear Agnese, what a sweet little saint you are," said Grace, stooping reverently to kiss her forehead. "Would that I could feel as you do!"

"We will pray for him, most especially, to-morrow," Agnese went on to say. "We will pray for him in our wild chapel by the seashore, when Jesus descends in the midst of us, and for our sakes reposes on the hard rock, instead of the golden altars, to which in happier lands, He is invited; then we will pray to Him with all our hearts and souls for this unhappy man. We will say to Him: my God, I give Thee all, my own interests and the interests of all who are dear to me—my hopes, and fears, and joys, and sorrows; the life of this dear uncle, and the heartbreak of his mother. I abandon them to Thee; I will ask nothing for them or for myself; only grant me, in exchange, the conversion of him who has caused all our sorrow."

"Surely, dear child, He will grant you such a prayer as that."

"Sure He will," answered the Little Spouse, with a look of loving confidence. "Other things the sweet Jesus may deny us; but mercy He never refuses, whether we ask it for ourselves or for another."

"You put me to the blush, Agnese. I thought I had forgiven him long ago, but I see it was only with half a heart, while you have done it with a heart and a half. Well, you will see to-morrow how fervently I will pray for the man's conversion."

"Do not call him 'man' that way," pleaded Agnese. "Do, dear Grace, try to think of him as your uncle, and yet more as the creature of Christ Jesus crucified, who suffered for him, and died for him as well as for us all."

"Yes, it is very true," thought Grace Netterville, as she stepped into the little boat which was to convey her to her home among the rocks. "Squire Netterville is the creature of Christ crucified, and my father's brother; my own uncle, and the uncle of the only real little angel I ever met with on earth—and that is Agnese."

CHAPTER V.

THE day was dark and stormy, the boat tossed roughly on the waters, and Agnese shivered with fear and cold, as the spray dashed wildly over her face and person.

"You are cold, Agnese," said her sister, the sole other occupant of the boat, and manager of its oars.

"I am afraid," the blind child answered; "it seems so strange to be tossing up and down so wildly, and not to know the reason why."

Grace Netterville took the cloak off her own shoulders, and put it round her sister.

"There, dear child," she said, in her most cheerful voice; "with your pretty dress beneath, and my old frieze above, you look like a traveling fairy, or a princess in disguise. But would you rather I should put back to land? It is a wild morning, and almost too rough for you."

"Oh, no," cried Agnese, after a moment's hesitation, "I am going to Him, so I ought not to be afraid."

"You need not, dear one. Did not Peter walk to Him in safety over the stormy waters? and why not you?"

"Thank you, Grace, for putting me in mind of that; I will think of it, and try not to be afraid again."

Grace said no more, for the storm was rising fast, and it was all she could do to manage her little vessel; at last, however, she succeeded in nearing the little island towards which its course had been directed, and in guiding it into a creek, serving as an entrance to one of those caves everywhere so common on that part of the Irish coast, and with which this little island, in particular, was almost honeycombed throughout.

The sea penetrated a considerable way beneath the rocks,

but they were now floating upon smooth waters, and a few lazy strokes of the oar sufficed to bring them to the shallows, where a strong hand laid hold of the boat, and drew it high and dry upon the sands, and Grace Netterville jumped out.

"God save you, Dan," she said to the man, at the same time assisting her little sister to follow her example.

"The same to you kindly, mavourneen," replied the man; "you have had a rough passage of it, Miss May."

"Aye, aye," rejoined Grace, or May, as we ought now to call her; "the white horses are playing strange pranks out yonder upon the ocean."

"'Tis a spring-tide, too," said Dan, "and if the wind continue in this quarter, his reverence won't read Mass dry-shod this blessed mornin', I'm thinking."

"Well, well," said Grace, with her merriest laugh, "his reverence can change his shoes afterwards, and most of his congregation, God help them, have no shoes to change."

"Merry Asthur to me, if you ever said a truer word nor that, Miss May," said Dan, holding his own bare foot to the light of the bogwood torch, which he had kindled during the conversation, and now presented to his mistress.

May took it, and twining her other arm around her little sister's waist, and whispering to her not to be afraid, drew her forward into the cavern. It grew very dark as they proceeded; and had it not been for her blazing torch, May Netterville might have found some difficulty in steering clear of the sharp-pointed rocks everywhere scattered around, and of the pools of water, some of them looking fearfully dark and deep, which had been left there by the high tides. Presently the dark wall of rock receded upon either side, spring up into wide and lofty arches over their heads; and, instead of the stony surface which had wounded her feet sadly, Agnese felt that she was walking on smooth sands, though even these indicated by their unusual moisture, the presence of the ocean at no very distant period of time. An enormous mass of black stone, perfectly detached from the surrounding rock, stood in the midst of this cavern chamber; it resembled, in some degree, a boulder-stone of unusual size, only the back part, which rose considerably higher than the front, was fashioned into something of the likeness of a rude stone cross, while the lower portion was quite flat enough to admit of its serving for an altar—a purpose to which the lighted candles, in their tin or wooden candlesticks, and the few poor vestments laid upon it, sufficiently indicated it was now to be devoted. Behind this Druid-like altar, in a little nook, where she was completely screened from observation, May Netterville placed her sister, kneeling down at the same time beside her, and still holding her round the waist, in order to give her courage. She had previously cast away her bogwood torch, which a wide fissure in the rocks above caused to be no longer needed. Daniel, however, was apparently of a different opinion regarding its necessity, for he picked it up, while it was yet smoking on the floor, relighted it from one of the candles burning on the altar, and very gravely presented it to his young mistress.

"What is it, Daniel," said May, it must be confessed a little pettishly. "Why waste the good bogwood? I don't want it here."

"Maybe not, Miss May, but somebody is wanting you for all that. Here's little Paudeen without says the mistress is in a great hurry to see you, and won't have you wait for his reverence's Mass."

"Is, then, my grandmother ill?" said May, rising hurriedly from her knees.

"Not as I know on, Miss May, but Paudeen says she is very wake and low like, and his reverence would have stayed with her till you came, only old Norrishea is dying, and he was forced to go off to the other side of the island to see her, and so he bid you come as quick as you could."

Daniel looked as if there was more the matter than he chose to tell of, and May turned anxiously to her sister:

"My grandmother wants me, darling; will you be afraid of staying here alone? I will come or send for you directly after Mass."

"Oh, never mind me—I am not a bit afraid, dear Grace," said Agnese, earnestly.

"Agnese," whispered her sister, in a low voice, "I feel as if our grandmother were to die to-day—pray for her to Jesus, dear one."

Agnese kissed her sister's hand in token of assent, and May, taking the torch from Daniel, threaded her way rapidly among the pools of water, and soon disappeared at the entrance of the cave. She had not been long gone when the poor people began to arrive from the mainland, dropping in by twos and threes, and crowding towards the altar, before which they prayed so fervently and so loudly, that the air seemed filled with the murmur of their voices. A whisper of "hush! his reverence," soon afterwards announced the coming of the priest, and, amid many a blessing given and received, Father Netterville advanced to the foot of the altar, where, after a few minutes spent in deep recollection of spirit, he began to vest himself for the celebration of the divine Sacrifice. And now the low, fervent tones of his voice reached Agnese's ear, and she drank them in as the sweetest music, for theirs was the genuine language of the Church, and the announcement to her of the true coming of Jesus. The bells rang out the "Gloria in Excelsis," and her heart re-echoed the song of the angels, which it is intended to recall; the Gospel was said, and, to her vivid faith, it was as if she stood up to hear that voice which once spoke its wisdom throughout Israel. The "Holy, holy, holy" of the Preface found her walking in spirit beside Him on His entrance into Jerusalem; and "holy, holy, holy" she once more said in spirit, with the bright bands of the cherubim and seraphim, who well she knew were crowded into every nook of that dark cave, in the solemn hour of the consecration, when the word was spoken, though not aloud, which drew Him once more from the bosom of His heavenly Father, to receive the adoration of His earthly creatures. Upon that rude rock He was—amid the wild waves, and the moaning winds, and the prostrate people—and not in spirit only, but in the very form which He took from Mary. Joy was in Agnese's heart, for now she knew she was kneeling in very deed at His feet; and so she said the "Our Father" as she might have said it had she been present when He taught it to His disciples, waiting still to hear, and repeating all the words, as if from His very lips she took them. At the "Agnus Dei" she kissed in spirit His sacred hands, imploring the gifts of His mercy from them. At the "Domine non sum dignus" she craved a yet closer union with Him, saying over and over again, with clasped hands and streaming eyes; "Oh, that the dove would descend and give Him to my prayers!" And, if not sacramentally, epiritually, at least He did descend into that loving little heart, blessing it so entirely by His presence, that she became as one insensible to external objects, unconscious of the presence of others, and deaf even to the strange muttering sounds that now filled the cavern, giving fearful evidence of the coming storm. Long, indeed, before the conclusion of the divine Sacrifice the people had begun to look on each other with pale faces and anxious eyes—here and there those who had wives and children gathered them together and then hurriedly departed—and, just after the consecration, Daniel, approaching Father Netterville, whispered a few words in his ear.

"Tell the people to depart directly, if there is time," was the hurried answer.

"There is plenty of time if they go at once, for the tide won't be at its full for another hour. But won't your reverence lave it with them?" asked Daniel, anxiously; "it wouldn't be safe to remain much longer."

"Then see that the people do not linger," replied the father; "I must finish what I have begun;" and, satisfied of the safety of his flock, he resumed the interrupted service with as calm composure as if his life were not perilled by the delay. Daniel lost not a moment in communicating this mandate to the congregation, and a simultaneous rush instantly took place to the entrance, but the faithful fellow lingered yet a few minutes longer, looking wistfully towards the father, until, at a sign from this last, he also reluctantly withdrew; and now there

only remained the priest at the altar and the blind child, and—but we must not anticipate. A few minutes more brought the service to a conclusion, and then Father Netterville likewise left the cave, in total ignorance of the presence of another human being within it, for, as I have said already, Grace had placed her sister in a nook behind the rock, where she was completely hidden from observation. The ceasing of his voice roused her at last from her dream of prayer, and then she began to wonder why it was she heard no longer any stir among the people. At first she attributed this to the thousand voices of the storm, which every moment raged louder and louder; but at last she became conscious of her solitude, and, chilled with cold and a thousand vague apprehensions, listened anxiously for the footsteps of her sister, seeking in vain to conjecture the cause of her absence. Poor child! she was little aware of the real nature of her situation—that May, at the bedside of her dying grandmother, was wholly unconscious of the danger to which she was exposed—that, when the north wind, and the spring tide came together, the cave was often many fathoms under water, and that Father Netterville had himself departed in the very last moment when escape by a boat was possible. Minute after minute of the hour noted by Daniel passed away, and every minute brought the danger nearer to its unconscious victim. Rapidly the advancing tide poured itself into the dark, deep pools, filling every empty nook and cranny with its water; then it dashed madly against the rocks, which at first bravely repelled the foe, sending it upwards to the caverned roofs in showers of spray; but wave followed wave with irresistible perseverance, and at last they also were surrounded and submerged, their sharp, black points appearing yet a moment longer above the surface of the foam, and then swept entirely out of sight beneath one triumphant billow. This obstacle overcome, the waters flowed in more calmly, and, although deafened by the storm and drenched by the spray, Agnese was not entirely aware of her danger until the tide swept her very feet, like a greedy monster crouching for its prey. Then all at once the truth flashed upon her mind, and, springing to her feet, she endeavored to clamber up the steep sides of the rock, close to which she had been kneeling. In a calmer moment, even with the full possession of her eyesight, she could not have succeeded in such an undertaking; but now, under the influence of that instinct for self-preservation which often suggests and enables us to accomplish things we should have otherwise deemed impossible, in the twinkling of an eye, how or in what manner she never afterwards could explain, Agnese found herself panting and trembling on the altar above. A loud groan soon announced to her that she was not its only tenant, and she might have fancied Father Netterville to have been the companion of her danger, had not the succession of groans and cries which followed been mingled with imprecations and blasphemies, which she felt never could have issued from the lips of a priest; and, after listening for a few minutes, unable, even in that hour of terror, to restrain her holy indignation, she cried out in Italian:

“O man! cease to blaspheme your Saviour—cease to crucify God anew.”

An icy cold hand was laid on hers.

“Say, child, is there no hope? Must we indeed perish thus?”

“I trust not,” said Agnese, speaking with some difficulty in English, which the shock had almost banished from her memory. “God is good. He may yet save us.”

“Fool! there is no hope,” roared the voice. “Do I not know this cavern well? In a few minutes more the waves will have reached this rock; and even if they do not rise much higher, their strength alone will sweep us from this surface.”

“And if it indeed be so,” said Agnese, with a calmness which, in such an hour, and from so young a creature, was, in truth, sublime, “know you not, man, that each of us must die in the very hour when God doth call us? O creature of Christ Jesus crucified,” she added suddenly changing her tones, and grasping the terrified wretch by both his hands, “why should you fear to die? Has He not died for you?”

“You talk bravely,” said the other in a seething tone. “Have you, then, no fear of death, that you pretend not to shudder at its approach?”

“What for should I fear death?” the child replied, in her sweet broken English. “I have often asked to go to Him, and if He say, ‘Come to me over the stormy waters,’ why should I be afraid of going?”

For a moment the man fixed his eyes in wonder upon this frail child, so fearful by nature, and yet so fearless now. There she knelt calmly, as if before some sainted shrine, her hands crossed, her head bowed, her lips moving, not in impatient murmuring, but in prayer. A huge wave almost dashing him from the rock of refuge, soon recalled him to remembrance of his own fearful situation, and uttering a terrible imprecation he cast his eyes upwards, not, alas! in supplication, but despair. Through the wide-rent chasm in the roof, he could see the bright, blue skies above, looking down upon him, calm and high, as if to rebuke his desperation; but the next moment a dark shadow passed between him and them. At first he thought he had lost his sight, then a vague hope began to creep into his soul. He strained his eyes until the balls seemed starting from their sockets. It was indeed as he had hardly dared to fancy—a human form was visible above, and a face of ashy paleness was gazing through the chasm.

“Mother of God!” cried the voice of a woman, “the child is below!”

It was May Netterville who spoke. She had found her grandmother apparently sinking fast but even this deep anxiety could not banish her blind sister from her thoughts.

She felt uneasy at having left her alone, and foreseeing the impossibility of going in search of her herself, sent little Pauden down to the shore, with directions to inform her the moment he should see Daniel returning from the cave. As we have already seen, this event occurred much sooner than could have been expected; but Pauden, who knew nothing of the high tide, and who was well aware that, under all ordinary circumstances, it would be at least half an hour before he could make his appearance, thought it would be no great injury to his employer if he spent the intervening moments in bird-nesting along the cliffs. The consequence was that he missed Daniel altogether; and the latter had been some time on shore, when May Netterville, becoming feverishly impatient at the long delay, left her grandmother, to the care of an attendant, and went in search of him herself. He was soon visible coming from the cliffs; but the instant she named the child, the alteration of his countenance filled her with horror.

“What is it man? Speak! speak!” she cried, struggling with her apprehensions.

“The spring tide!—the spring tide!” gasped the man; “the child is lost!”

For a moment May Netterville felt as if life were ebbing from her veins. One hope remained.

“Father Netterville!” suggested Daniel; “maybe his reverence brought her back with him.”

“No, no,” cried May; “he knew not she was there.”

“Yonder he is, coming over the cliff; he must have landed full a quarter of an hour ago; no boat could live in such a surf as that,” and Daniel pointed with a tremulous finger to the mighty billows that now dashed against the beetling rocks, marking the entire line of coast with their sheets of foam.

White as ashes, and shaking from head to foot, May turned her eyes in the direction of his hand, and saw indeed there was no hope among those breakers. But she was not one to sit down in despair while a chance or possibility urged her to exertion.

“A rope, Daniel! a rope! Through the chasm in the rock she may yet be saved!”

Daniel took the hint, and in an inconceivably short time, had joined her at the “Devil’s Bite,” as the opening into the cave was named among the people, bringing with him a basket and a rope, such as was used by the bird-nesters on the cliffs, to lower them to the objects of their perilous pursuit. He was

accompanied by the men from whom he had borrowed the machine, and May recognized among their faces some of the most reckless and well-known smugglers on the coast—men of lives so desperate, that at other time she would have shrunk from their contact, but at this moment she cared not who or what they were, so they could give her assistance in her need.

"I see her, I think," she said to Daniel. "She must be saved, Daniel, she must be saved."

Daniel cast a despairing glance, first down into the deep chasm, then on the old and knotted rope by which the basket was to be suspended.

"It is sartin death to whoever thries it," he muttered between his teeth."

"She must be saved," repeated May. "Will they hold the rope firm and steady, Daniel?"

"The rope 'll hardly bear a man's weight, let alone a child along wid him," said one of the smugglers giving the basket a contemptuous kick with his foot. "It is worn and twisted almost out iv its strength already."

"It will bear mine, then," said May, fixing her brave eyes on the man who had spoken,

"Yours, achorra!" cried Daniel. "No; rather than that, I will try it myself; and, Miss May, darlin', I know I needn't say a word about the little ones at home, for you war always tindher and kind, and a mother like to them as had no other, and so were all yer race afore you, for the matther of that, barrin' the ould rogue up at the hall—my heavy curse on him for the shame and sorrow he has brought on the name!" While speaking these words as rapidly as ever they could come out of his mouth, Daniel busily employed himself in arranging the rope and the basket for an immediate descent, but May Netterville touched him on the shoulder. "I thank you, Daniel; but I put no man's life in peril—mine will be sufficient."

"You will perish in the attempt, Miss May. See what a depth it is below; and if the rope should twist ever so little you will be dashed into atoms against the rocks."

"Men do these things every day for birds' nests," said May, speaking rapidly, but rather to herself than her companion, "and shall not I do it for Agnese?"

"Only look down, Miss May," continued Daniel. "Iv yer senses fail—iv the rope break; look down, alanna! look down!"

May Netterville did look down, and felt her brain grow dizzy as she looked. The descent was fearful, and the rocks beneath all the more terrible for the darkness in which they were partially enveloped, while the roar of the winds and of the waves, coming up in hollow and confused murmurs from out of the depths below, seemed to tell of the certain death awaiting her among them.

"Think of the ould lady, think of his riverence—what would they say?" pleaded Daniel in his most imploring accents.

Miss Netterville made no reply; she was battling with the mighty terror which had seized on her, and which almost threatened to deprive of her senses; but the struggle was over in a moment; down to the very bottom of her heart she sent her fear, down so deep that she herself was no longer conscious of its existence.

"What would they say, Daniel! They would say I had done my duty."

"Lower away, my men, lower away!" she cried, seating herself in the basket, her free, firm voice belying the deadly paleness of her lip and brow.

"Stop, for the love of the great God above ye—stop," cried Daniel, laying fast hold of her by the skirt of her dress. "Let me go in your room, Miss May, and sure I will bring her back to you iv I have to go look for her at the bottom of the say—only let me go in your room, a-chorra!"

"Away, away!" cried May Netterville, struggling violently to free herself from his grasp.

"I am ould, and it's no great matther to anyone when I go," sobbed the poor fellow, falling on his knees, and putting his

arms around her and the basket, so that she could not move. "But Miss May, darlin', all your young years are bright before you; do not cast them from you, as if you were ungrateful to their Giver."

"Stand back, man, stand back," cried May; "you peril the life of my sister in those vain delays."

The suddenness of the announcement threw Daniel off his guard; he cast up his eyes and arms to heaven in the excess of his astonishment; the smugglers seized the favorable moment, and May Netterville was half-way down the chasm before he had in any degree recovered the use of his senses. Short time had she for thought or terror, while hanging thus fearfully midway in the air. Sight and sound, the boiling surge, the beetling rocks, the howling storm, all passed confusedly through her brain; and not until she was safely landed on the altar rock, not until she had clasped her blind sister with all the wild energy of her nature to her bosom, did she fully realize the danger of her situation.

"I knew you would come—I knew you would come," sobbed the child, twining her arms round her sister's neck, and more moved, as it sometimes happens, by the prospect of rescue than she had been in the presence of danger. "I knew *He* would send you to me."

"Yes, yes, dearest child, but we must hasten away now, for the tide is rising fast. Ah!" cried May, recoiling from another hand laid upon her garments; "you here!" she added, when, her eyes becoming accustomed to the dim light, she recognized the terror-stricken features of Squire Netterville.

"Unhappy man! pray well to God, for death is coming fast on yonder breakers."

"Save me, save me," gasped the wretch, already almost choked in his agony.

"I came to save my sister, and I will save her, so help me God!" said May, resolutely, unbinding the girdle from her waist and fastening Agnese to her own person with it.

"May Netterville, May Netterville! by the blood that flows in both our veins, have pity on your father's brother."

"Agnese first," said May. "I will sent the rope for another turn."

"There will be no time—no time!" shrieked the squire, as a huge wave struck him on the shoulder.

"And what of my life—what of the child?" said May, almost fiercely, in her deep disgust for his selfish egotism.

"It is not my life I crave," sobbed the renegade at her feet; "it is my salvation."

May hesitated: she saw there was indeed but little time to lose. A few more such breakers as the last would clear the rock of its living occupants; and her human nature struggled hard with the holy inspiration which suggested the sacrifice of her own life, and that of the child she so dearly loved, for the sake of one who had been, not merely the destroyer of her own earthly prospects, but who could scarcely be held innocent of the lives of her parents.

"Water may drown—fire will not burn you," murmured the unhappy man. "You are innocent—you may go to God; but I have the sin of Judas on my soul!"

"Save him, save him, dearest Grace," Agnese whispered now.

May looked at her, and for a moment thought of sending her up with the squire; but she changed her mind, fearing that, in his selfish terror, he might seek to lighten the rope by casting her from him.

"Even now," thought she, "he is so mad with fear, he sees not how easy it would be for him, a strong man, to rob a poor girl like me of the rope, which is our only chance of safety."

"Save him, save him," Agnese once more pleaded, as she saw her sister's hesitation.

But it needed not the urging. The large noble portion of her nature had conquered the little inferior part. May put the rope in Squire Netterville's hand, saying:

"Place yourself in the basket, and hold fast the rope—it is your only chance."

"I cannot," said the squire; "my arm is useless. I put out the shoulder in climbing this accursed rock."

"This then is the secret of your submissiveness," thought May. But she said nothing, merely passing the rope round the waist of her enemy, and securing him as well as she could to the basket.

"Save yourself, also, dearest Grace," cried Agnese. "Indeed, I am not afraid to stay alone."

"No, dear child, we will live or die together," said May, folding her arms round her sister, and giving the preconceived signal for the hoisting of the rope.

Up went the basket directly, and a shout of execration hailed the appearance of the squire overhead; but May Netterville heard it not. With her blind sister bound tightly to her bosom, one hand yet clasping her for greater security, while the other grasped the stone cross of the altar, all her energies of soul and body were concentrated in the effort to preserve herself and her precious charge from being swept away by the breakers. Quicker and stronger every minute they came dashing over her; one had scarcely retired, before another, yet more terrible, leaped into its place, threatening to bury her beneath its waters; and scarcely able to breathe, half drowned, half blind beneath the merciless showers of spray, her bodily power was rapidly failing, and even her high courage almost exhausted, when something dark passed through the air, and the rope and the basket lay at her feet. Too late, too late—all her strength was gone; sight and sense had nearly failed her; the hand that grasped the cross fell powerless at her side; and the next wave would have borne her far from her rock of refuge, had not a strong arm been thrown around her and a strong hand bound her and her half-dead sister to the basket; and when next May Netterville opened her eyes, she found herself lying on the rocks, from whence she had descended only half an hour before. With the exception of one old woman, busily occupied in the care of Agnese, there seemed no one near her. May felt as if she had been in a terrible dream.

"Daniel, Daniel!" she cried, sitting up, and trying to recall her scattered senses. "Surely, Daniel was with us among the waters."

"To be sure he was—to be sure he was," cried Daniel, darting from behind the rocks, which had kept him out of sight, and crying and laughing both at the same time, in the excess of his delight at once more hearing her speak. "And did you think, a-lanna, that poor Daniel was going to let you be drowned, for the sake of the precious ould rogue you sent us up in the basket?"

"Hush! hush!" said May, something like a smile playing round her own pale lips, while she took her still insensible sister from the arms of old Moya. "But I thank God you are safe, Daniel. I never should have felt happy again, if you had lost your life in my service."

"Now, may heaven's blessin' be upon you for that very word, Miss May," said the poor fellow, gratefully. "And niver think, a-chorra, that I risked your precious life by puttin' my clumsy self in the basket along wid ye. No, no; I knew better nor that, I hope. Manners, says I to myself; Mither Daniel, ladies first, iv you please. So with that I made the rope tight round your own purty little waist; and stuck like an oyster to the rock, whilst they were hoisting yez up."

"I am, indeed, most grateful for your generous devotion," murmured May, still speaking and feeling like one in a dream, so completely had her strength been exhausted in the struggle.

"May I never sin, Miss May, if I didn't think the good people had been at some of their tricks, when, instead of the sweet little dove that went down in the basket, I seed the ugly ould squire, lookin' for the world like a carcumvinted magpie half drowned in its nest."

"The squire! the squire!" cried May, springing to her feet, as all the particulars of her adventure now flashed on her memory.

"Ah! now you look like yourself again, Miss May; so I may

venture to tell you, I'm afeard there'll be wild work among the smugglers this mornin'. It seems Squire Netterville has been a huntin' some of them for croppies these six months, so they swore they would spoil his sport for the future. And troth," continued Daniel, not looking, it must be confessed, much distressed at the prospect, "it's like enough they'll be as good as their word, for Shane iv the Lift Hand is among them, and he fears neither man or devil, when he has a mind for a bit of revenge."

"Good God, Daniel! and whither have they brought him?"

"Down yonder to the Dead Man's Cave, Miss May; and a bad place it is; and many a bad deed it has seen; and not the least, either, I'm thinkin', for Shane is a terrible man for a bit iv revenge; and he says the squire swore three of his sons to to the gallows for rebels; and —. But where are you startin' off to in such a hurry, Miss May?"

"To prevent murder, to be sure," cried May. "Run, Daniel, to my uncle, and bring him hither directly. Moya, stay with the child—or rather take her to my grandmother's. And you, Daniel, run for your very life."

And having rapidly given these directions, May Netterville darted off like lightning in the direction of the Dead Man's Cave. She was not a minute too soon. By the light of a torch which one of the smugglers held in his hand, she beheld her unhappy uncle, bound hand and foot to a projecting portion of the rock, and gagged so tightly to prevent him from screaming, that his face was completely distorted, and his eyes almost starting from his head by the pressure. The smugglers were crowding fiercely round him, with many a muttered threat and half-suppressed execration; and a vessel full of tar, and a great heap of feathers, too plainly proclaimed the terrible fate in store for him. As she entered the cave, the quick eye of May Netterville took in all this at a glance; and without bestowing a thought on her own safety, or the risk she was running, she passed right through the crowd, and interposed her slight form between them and their victim.

"What are you about, my men," she cried. "Would you commit murder?"

"We would give to the duoul his own," said Left-hand Shane, eyeing the squire with savage malignity.

"Then you should give your own necks to the hangman," retorted May, fearlessly. "Think you not the whole country would rise to avenge such an outrage as this?"

"The whole country would belie its own thoughts and feelings, then," muttered Shane. "From the young girl, who, they say, is still to the fore, to step into his shoes, down to the poorest craythur on the estate, not a man, woman, or child that wouldn't dance with joy over the renegade's grave."

"Now, at least, you lie, man," said May, drawing her slight form to its utmost height, and looking proudly on the wondering men. "For I am the young girl of whose will you prate so freely; and I swear to you, if you do this deed, I will pursue you to the gallows. Yes; though the broad lands of Netterville were to be sold for the money."

"You talk big, Miss Netterville," said Shane, a shade of respect unconsciously mingling with his former manner; "but you forget that you also are in our power."

"I do not forget it," said May; "you shall kill me before you touch one hair of his head; and see if the country will be as lenient upon you for the murder of the niece as for that of the uncle. Now, man, come on! You may tar and feather us both together if you will."

And in her lofty self-forgetfulness, May actually flung her arms round the neck of the man, from whose touch she would, at any other time, have recoiled with as much loathing as she would have done from that of a serpent.

"Miss Netterville," said Shane, impatiently, "I mane you no harm, but I have sworn to have the life of this man; and by the dark duoul I will have it; so stand back iv you value your own."

Miss Netterville, however, stirred not an inch.

"Work your will, if you list," she contented herself with saying, "but it must be upon us both."

The smuggler's brow grew dark, and he seized her with no gentle hand.

"Loose him," he cried; "loose him; or by all the powers above and below, I'll do ye a mischief."

But still May clung closely to her uncle, uttering scream after scream, in hopes of bringing some one to her aid.

"Hould yer tongue, will ye, or shall I make ye?" said the savage, fumbling in his pocket as if for a knife. Happily, one of the others now interfered by catching hold of his arm, and saying:

"No, no, Shane! For the ould one it's all fair enough. He's a spy and a thraytor, and deservin' his doom. But you shan't touch the young one with my good will."

"Nor with mine," "Nor mine," echoed several voices among the men, many of whom knew May by sight, although not by name, and loved her for her good and gentle deeds among the poor.

"Shan't I though?" cried Shane, dropping May's arm and turning round upon his new opponents. "Dhar-a-loursa! and who is to prevent me, I wonder?"

"He who would avenge her," said a voice at his elbow. The smuggler turned with something like fear depicted in his bold countenance, and met the eyes of Father Netterville gazing sadly upon him. "My children," continued the good man, looking slowly round, and recognizing many of his own flock in the fierce-looking group before him—"what are you about, my children? Is it to see you commit deeds like this one that I have labored among you for so many years?"

"Sure, yer riverence, he dhrew it upon himself," said one of the men, in an exculpatory tone, while others hung back, apparently fearful and ashamed at the rebuke of their priest. "What is he on the island for, at all at all, the black villian, iv it isn't as a spy and a thraytor?"

"Vengeance is mine saith the Lord, and I will repay it," shouted Father Netterville; "and who are you, my children," he continued more mildly, "that you should usurp the privileges He has reserved for Himself? or is His arm shortened, or His eye no longer upon you, that you dare to take His deed upon yourselves?"

"'Tis a self-defence, and not a vingeance," said Shane, speaking for the first time since the priest had entered the cavern. "For by the gonnies, if we let him off now, he's have a hempen cravat for some of our necks afore another blissed month is over our heads."

"It is written," said the father, sternly, "thou shalt do no murder. Loose him, May," he continued, untwining his niece's arm gently from around the pale victim's form—"if he were ten times a spy, he shall go forth in safety from this cave;" and picking up Shane's own knife, which he had dropped upon the floor, Father Netterville deliberately cut the intended victim's bands, and loosed the gag which had all but choked him.

As he did so the features of the squire assumed their natural appearance; his senses, almost banished by pain and fear, gradually returned; and he looked long and steadily on the face of his deliverer. Father Netterville returned his troubled gaze, and for the first time for many years brother looked on brother, until, like a second Joseph, the memory of the Christian priest seemed to leap over years of injury and ill-deeds; his heart yearned towards the companion of his childhood, and falling on his neck, he wept over him with a loud voice.

"Brother forgive me," murmured the squire, in an articulate voice.

"My son, my brother, you are forgiven," said the father; and then he lifted up his face, still wet with his tears, towards that crowd that now pressed around him, all their fiercer passions lulled into sympathy for one whose saintly deeds had won their love, full as much as his saintly character had commanded their respect.

"My children, you must let this man go free. I will answer for him, that he will intrude upon you no more."

"We will, your riverence—for your riverence's sake he is free."

"Not for mine," said the priest, reverentially uncovering his head, "but let it be for *His* who died for him and for us all."

Involuntarily the men lifted their hats. Bold and lawless as they were, and wrought, by ill-usage, to many an evil deed, they were not merely susceptible of generous impulses in themselves, but deeply capable of appreciating it in others. And in their reverence for Father Netterville, as a minister of God, and yet more in their admiration of the meek forgiveness of the life-long injuries inflicted on him by his brother, there was not one among them, with the exception of Left-handed Shane himself, who would not now have risked his life in defence of the very man whom five minutes before they were intent upon torturing to the most hideous of deaths.

Father Netterville read their altered feelings at a glance; but there was something in Shane's eye which convinced him he was not to be so easily persuaded or convinced.

"In the name of Him who pardoned His enemies with His dying breath, I thank you, my children. But you have a right to demand every security in my power to offer, and therefore he shall swear."

"Swear!" echoed Shane, with a most disdainful movement of the upper lip—"his oath!—the man who swore away his brother's life and lands—poh!"

Father Netterville sighed—it was indeed vain to put trust in the renegade's oath. He thought of another and a better security.

"How did you bring him hither?"

"Blindfolded," said Shane. "We wouldn't trust the renegade even in his grave."

"Then bind his eyes again," said Father Netterville, "and I swear to you he shall not look upon the light again until he opens them in his mother's chamber. To the bedside of a dying parent you will surely believe that he would not willingly bring strife and bloodshed."

May undid the kerchief from her neck, but Shane snatched it rudely from her, and bound it so tightly round the eyes of Squire Netterville, that he uttered an involuntary expression of pain. "Curse ye!" Shane fiercely muttered below his breath, "it is better than the cravat you twisted round the necks of my brave boys." Father Netterville overheard the words, and unwilling to try the temper of such a man much longer, he took the arm of his brother, and led him from among them. "Whither do you bring me?" said the squire hoarsely.

"To the bedside of our mother. I would have her bless you, my brother, before she departs."

Squire Netterville shuddered, and suffered his brother to lead him forward in silence. The Dead Man's Cave communicated by an underground passage with one in which Father Netterville had found a temporary home for himself and his mother; and through this he now led the squire; but he paused at the further end of the gallery, and said to May, "Stay you here, my child, and watch him, while I go in and prepare my mother."

The squire seemed struggling with some terrible apprehensions. "Do not go in, brother! do not go in!" he cried vehemently.

"And wherefore not? I will be with you in a moment," said the priest, mildly; and gently disengaging himself from his brother's detaining hand, he proceeded at once into the recesses of the further cavern. A wild shout from their depths instantly succeeded his disappearance. May uttered an exclamation of horror, and darted after him like an arrow; and tearing the bandage off his eyes, the squire followed in her footsteps, just in time to behold his brother seized and handcuffed by a party of soldiery under the command of one whose name is yet held in execration by the Irish peasantry, as that of a man altogether reckless of human life, and under the specious pretext of martial law, stepped to the eyes in the blood of the guiltless as well as the guilty.

"You have done this," cried May, turning round upon Squire Netterville with a flashing eye and quivering lip.

"Brother," faltered the unhappy man, "as God sees me, I knew not that you were my brother. It was only by a conversation I overheard this morning in the cave, that I learned I had a mother and a brother yet existing. I thought you had perished long ago."

"My son, my brother, I do believe you," said Father Netterville mildly.

But May looked fiercely incredulous.

"Save him, then," she said, "if you would have us believe you innocent of his blood. You have brought these men hither—you can send them away again, I suppose, if you will."

"Your pardon, madam," said the officer coldly. Mr. Netterville certainly gave information of a croppy priest lurking in these caves, who, some months ago, had been openly seen with a party of armed rebels, but there his duty ceased. I alone am in authority here."

Father Netterville might easily have brought witnesses to prove that he had been among the rebels only to induce them to disperse quietly to their homes; but he was silent, for he knew the man he had to deal with, and felt that any one speaking in his favor was more likely to be hanged as a rebel than heard as a witness. In his fear of compromising others, he even congratulated himself upon having, previously to his visit to the Dead Man's Cave, sent his faithful Daniel on a message to the dying Norrisheen, which would insure his absence for at least an hour longer, so fearfully uncertain was life and liberty in the days when martial law held sway over the land.

"My uncle is neither a rebel nor a croppy," said May, proudly, in answer to the officer's last insinuation.

"We shall that, presently, madam," said the officer; "martial law is a great enlightener in these intricate cases. Mr. Netterville, will you kindly lead the young lady hence? Justice is a hard-hearted dame, and loves not the presence of the young and lovely at her counsels; and besides," he added, with a bitter sneer, "I would spare *your* feelings also the hard task of bearing witness against a brother."

May cast a troubled look upon the speaker: there was something in his face which made her tremble, and, weeping bitterly, she threw herself at the feet of Father Netterville. He also read his doom upon that darkling brow, but, faithful to the principle which had guided him through life, he prepared to meet his impending fate in the same spirit of simple firmness with which he would have accomplished any other duty arising from his mission among a suspected and much persecuted people; and when he spoke again, his voice was as calm and soothing as though he did not know that the hand of violence was about to hush its accents forever.

"Grieve not, my child, for I am innocent of all rebellion; take your uncle to my mother, but say nothing to her of all this; it would only give her causeless sorrow."

May caught hold of his hands, and deluged them with her tears.

"My uncle, my father," she whispered, "give me your blessing."

"May heaven bless you, my own—my only one!" he answered, laying his hands in solemn benediction on her head, and then stooping down, he gently kissed her brow. Well he knew it was his final blessing—his last farewell to the child of his life-long love and care. "And now," he added, placing her reluctant hand in that of her less worthy relative, "lead him to my mother. Brother, farewell! you are forgiven."

May rose from her knees; she dreamed not of the instant death awaiting the priest, but the squire knew it well! and he saw, by the emphasis laid upon the word "forgiven," that his brother knew it also.

In that terrible moment, shame, remorse and horror were all busy at his heart, so choking him and paralyzing all his powers that he could neither ask forgiveness of his victim, nor yet return the embrace in which it was imparted; cold, silent, and despairing, he turned from the brother whom, unconsciously, but surely, he had pursued to the death, and followed the footsteps of his niece, looking, feeling and moving all the while

like one under the influence of a horrible nightmare. May laid her hand upon the curtain which separated her mother's chamber from the outer passage of the cave, and he would have stepped beneath it had she not stopped and laid her hand on his arm. Mechanically he paused, and looked upon her, but it was with eyes which had lost all consciousness of her presence.

"John Netterville," said May, with a kindling eye and heightened color, "you have come hither to-day as a spy on the life and liberty of the best and gentlest being upon earth—the nearest and dearest you left for me to love. Long ago you drove my father and my mother from their home and their own country—one to perish on a field of blood, the other to die in sorrow and in want; me you have beaten, as you would have beaten the very hound at your feet; and for all these things I have twice this day given you back your life. All I ask of you in return," she added, in softer, milder accents than she had used in the beginning, "is, that the last half of your life may be spent in weeping for the first."

John Netterville listened to her at first with the same lustrous eyes and vacant stare, but, as she proceeded, his consciousness gradually returned; convulsion after convulsion shook his frame; he tried to speak, but could not; the wondering girl was about to go and fetch him some water, but he caught her by the arm, staggering, as he did so, like a wounded man. Just then a hand from within drew aside the curtain, and the tall, wasted form of a woman appeared at the opening, gazing silently upon him.

"Mother, forgive me," burst from his lips, and he fell on his knees.

The dying woman moved her bloodless lips; she was about to speak, when a confused sound of voices and footsteps was heard from without—then there was an ominous pause—then a frightfully prolonged scream,—and then old Moya rushed into the cavern, exclaiming:

"Gracious God! they have murdered his riverence."

"Oh, curse him not—curse him not," cried May, terrified at the expression of the mother's face; "bless him, mother, before you go."

The dying woman opened wide her arms: "May God forgive as I do—my son, God bless thee."

John Netterville caught her to his bosom; but the mother's heart was broken—she was dead before she had touched his shoulder.

The prayer of Agnese had been heard in heaven—the sacrifice accepted in its utmost rigor.

Father Netterville, the good and kind, was dead. The shepherd had laid down his life for his flock, and the mother had departed in sorrow to her tomb; the price was paid—the prodigal was won—and John Netterville wept over her corpse—a penitent indeed!

CHAPTER VI.

"THERE it is again," said Agnese, as out of the confusion of sounds in the street below, the Hymn of the Blessed Sacrament came faintly to her ear. "Look out from the balcony, dearest Grace, and tell me if He is coming this way."

The Little Spouse of the Blessed Sacrament was laid upon a light couch, placed sufficiently near the open window to admit the visit of the soft summer breeze on her fevered brow. A loose white dressing-gown was wrapt around her, for she had been very ill, and even now the color on her cheek was all too bright for health, and the lustre of her eyes too dazzling. May Netterville, who never left her night or day, was seated at her side, and Lady Oranmore—sorrow in her heart, and tears, which she vainly struggled to repress, often starting to her eyes—was standing in the very same balcony, from whence, just one year before, she had looked down on the illuminated street, and the holy procession, and the fair child now visibly dying beneath her eyes; passing, she could not but feel, from earth to heaven, and going gently, sweetly, al-

most imperceptibly to the bosom of that God whose path she had so often, and so lovingly followed upon earth.

It seemed as if she were in deed a child of especial predilection, and as if God had resolved upon granting even the smallest of her wishes, before complying with the chiefest of them all in calling her to Himself. She had prayed to revisit Italy ; and they had brought her to die amongst its flowers. She had mourned for the dear familiar faces of her childhood ; and now half as a mother, half as a nurse, the kind old Benita was ever at her side, while not a day passed without a visit from Francesco, and many a sweet and loving word from him concerning that sacrament of love which formed the bond of union between the heart of the old man and the poor blind child. What more was wanting for the happiness of Agnese ? Yes ; one thing more to fill her cup to overflowing—one thing more without which the contents of that cup would have lost their sweetness to her lips ; and so that one thing more was granted. He who gave to her the creatures of her love would not deny Himself, whom she loved almost to the exclusion of His creatures ; therefore, upon the feast of Corpus Christi, just one week before the period of which our present chapter opens, He Himself, in her first communion, had all wed her, by her own experience, "to taste and see that the Lord is sweet."

From that moment May Netterville fancied she could perceive more of heaven and less of earth about her dying sister. Each day she spoke less often, and every time she spoke her voice seemed to have a greater sweetness in it. Each day she grew more recollected in herself and more absorbed, or rather, I should say, more *forgetful* of herself, and more recollected and absorbed in *Him*, who seemed to have chosen not merely this young spirit, but the very form in which it was enshrined, for the especial temple of His presence. And each day something more of reverence seemed to mingle with May's love for the dying child, and she would sit for hours beside her, stilling the regrets of her own loving heart, and resolutely putting back the prayer that, in spite of herself, would sometimes rise to her lips for the averting of a fate which yet she also felt to be less a death than a passing away from one life to another—from the life of loving expectation to that of certain and intense fruition. These thoughts were in her mind just now, as, with a half-finished wreath of white roses in her hands, she sat waiting the arrival of Francesco, who had promised to come and carry Agnese to Lady Oranmore's carriage. It was the first time she had been in the open air since she made her first communion, and, indeed, it was only by reiterated entreaties she had won the unwilling consent of her grandmother to be present at the evening benediction in the Church of the Blessed Sacrament.

The doctors had been appealed to, but they only shrugged their shoulders ; it was evident they thought her past hope or cure ; and so at last Lady Oranmore yielded, partly because she could deny nothing to her darling, and partly because she felt a kind of necessity in her own heart for revisiting the church where, just one year before, she had discovered Agnese. Besides, she knew it to be the eve of the feast of the Sacred Heart, when we celebrate Christ's love for man ; and possibly she might have indulged the vague hope that in this church God would give back to her prayers the treasure which, in this church, He had vouchsafed to her entreaties ; perhaps even she felt that she had need to ask forgiveness for her faithless attempt to warp the conscience of the guileless being, whom, in mercy to her sorrow, He had then confided to her keeping.

She could not think of it now without remorse, only softened by the feeling that, from the hour in which she had given May Netterville a promise to that effect, she had never interfered with the religion of Agnese. In truth, she needed all the consolation which this thought could yield her, to enable her to look with calmness on the dying child, as she lay, day-after-day, on her little couch—calm, still, and pale ; her hands folded meekly on her bosom, and deprived by her blindness of the amusements and distractions of other in-

valids. To Lady Oranmore's fancy this state of compelled inaction added to the sufferings of Agnese, yet it was not so in reality, for her heart and soul were so constantly with Jesus in the sacrament of His love, that Magdalen, at His very feet, could hardly have felt less need of external occupation. Such was her meditation and such her attitude at the present moment ; but after she had lain a little while quite still and silent, her eyes closed, and the bright color coming up into her face, as the soft strains of the hymn rose louder, she whispered to her sister :

"It is louder now, dear Grace. Look out from the balcony, and tell me if He is not coming this way."

"No," answered May. "I see not the procession, but yet it must be coming ; the voices are distinct. There, now, it has turned the corner ; and—but, holy Mother of God ! what a sight to see !" she cried, suddenly interrupting herself, and falling on her knees in the open balcony.

It was, indeed, as she said, a sight to see. She was looking down upon a large square, full of buyers, sellers, idlers, animals, carriages, ludicrous exhibitions and spectacles of all kinds. The Neapolitans, who almost live in the open air, were all in their open stalls, pursuing their several occupations, and knocking, hammering, shaving, weaving, fling, and planing ; water vendors were preparing their beverage ; fishwomen selling their fish ; housekeepers cooking their dinners—fish, chicken and macaroni ; and all the members of this vast assembly were screaming at the very top of their voices when the procession of the Blessed Sacrament entered the square.

Then, as if by magic, every voice was mute, every hat was doffed, every craft abandoned. The fishwomen ceased to sell, the housekeeper to cook, the showman to display his wares, the jester even to crack his jokes ; and every creature of those busy thousands was on his knees, awed into silence and the hush of prayer. Grace Netterville well might pronounce it "a sight to see." See did not look round again until some few minutes after the procession had passed from beneath the balcony, and when she did so, the square had resumed its usual appearance—business and folly being once more mingled together as the order of the day.

"In truth it is wonderful," she said, half aloud ; "the faith of this people, and their devotion."

"And which of them will be the better for it ?" replied Lady Oranmore coldly, for she sometimes sought a false peace of mind in contending, against her conscience, with the religion of her grandchildren. "Which of them will cheat the less, or gamble the less, for all this display of devotion which seems so admirable to you ?"

"Many, I should hope," said May, "But if it were only one, how often has Jesus preached to the crowd in Judea, and been contented by the conversion of one single individual ! Zaccheus, for instance, the sole penitent in the crowd which left Jericho to meet Him ; Matthew, called to His especial service from amid the multitude that yet were employed in glorifying God ; and Magdalen, for we read of none but her converted at the supper of Simeon."

"It is true," retorted Lady Oranmore, "only one convert is particularly mentioned in each of these instances, yet it does not follow that many may not have been secretly drawn towards their Saviour, and converted at the same time, though in a less ostensible and singular manner."

"Well," said May, "admitting it were, indeed, but one in that vast multitude below, He who died for each individual surely would not think the conversion of even one a useless labor. And though it were even not an entire conversion—but only a crime the less—one bargain fairly made—one oath unuttered—one irreverent jest unsaid ; surely He who died for every separate sin would not deem that He had been borne through the crowd in vain ; and though even (which seems impossible) no single crime had been prevented—no sinner checked in his evil ways, were it but for the comfort of one afflicted heart—for the giving of hope to one despairing soul—for the reminding of one in bodily suffering of all that He had suffered in the body for them, sure He who passed His life in

the consolation of His creatures, would not reckon that He had come in vain; and though none of all these things were done, and that it was but a single spark of divine love falling upon a spirit innocent before, but inactive for the want of the high inspiration of His charity, surely, surely, He who came to cast fire upon earth, would not grudge His presence, by which it had been enkindled."

May Netterville paused in her passionate address, and mutually, as if by a single impulse, she and Lady Oranmore cast their eyes upon Agnese. The child was kneeling on the bed, and with her soft eyes closed, her long hair parted smoothly on her forehead, and her white robes flowing round her, she seemed like an answer to the thoughts of each—"Would He grudge it?"

May could not forbear adding, in a whisper:

"Though it were only to visit such a soul as that."

Then, without waiting for an answer, she passed to the bed, and drew her sister gently towards the pillow, saying:

"Lie down, dearest; it is yet a long time to Francesco's hour. Lie down, or you will be weary."

Agnese laid down as she was desired, whispering at the same time, with a heavenly smile upon her countenance:

"Is it not lovely, Grace? And did I not tell you that here the very air was full of Jesus?"

"Yes, indeed!" May answered, in the same subdued voice. "And it is sweet to live in such an atmosphere of love and faith."

"He is everywhere in Italy," returned Agnese; "in the people's hearts, and on their lips, and in the churches; and even in the very streets we meet Him."

"And He is in the hearts of our own home people too, Agnese, if you would but think it," answered May, in a tone as nearly of reproach as she could use towards the gentle creature she so tenderly cherished. "His faith and love are with us also; only we are forced to lock up in our hearts the thoughts which these may prate to every idle air. But you won't believe it."

"Indeed, indeed, I do believe it May; it would be strange if I could doubt it, after all that passed on that terrible day," and Agnese shuddered as she always did whenever she recurred to the day of Father Netterville's murder. Poor child! she had good reason to remember it with horror, for she had been with old Moya at the moment that the latter, entering the cavern unperceived, became an eye-witness of the priest's violent death, which her cries soon revealed to her sightless companion, and the shock had gone far to destroy the little strength yet left Agnese, to contend with the various influences that were drawing her toward the grave.

May Netterville walked to the window—she also could never speak of that fearful event without a shudder, and something more than a shudder of grief and horror; for indignation, in spite of all her efforts to prevent it, would mingle with her feelings; and it cost her many a battle with her proud and passionate nature to still the loathing ever rising within her at the bare recollection of the guilty, yet, as she could not but acknowledge to herself, most repentant brother; and she was yet struggling with the storm which her sister's observation had awakened in her bosom, when a servant entered to tell her of a person asking an interview with her. May was so completely pre-occupied that she could scarcely be said to hear him, although she mechanically followed him to a room, which he indicated by throwing wide the door, and into this she entered without having formed one conjecture as to who or what the person was who desired to see her. He was sitting near the window, his back towards her, and his face buried in both his hands. May was started; something in his attitude was so familiar, that she could not help fancying that she had seen him before; but, as he did not look up, or give any other indication of being aware of her presence, she advanced a few steps towards him in hopes of arousing his attention. Far from having this effect, however, the sound of her footsteps seemed to shrink him yet more completely into himself, and he bowed himself down until his brow rested upon the table, as if thus

he hoped more entirely to conceal his identity from her. May began to feel exceedingly awkward.

"You sent for me, sir?" she said, at last, in English, a secret instinct seeming to tell her that the man before her was not Italian. Something very like a shudder passed over the stranger's frame; but he made no answer.

"Pardon me, sir," continued May, with a little impatience in her voice and manner: "I would not hurry you if I could help it, but I have left the bedside of a dying sister to attend your summons."

"Believe me, I would not idly have intruded upon your sorrow."

"John Netterville!" cried May, recoiling a step in amazement, as the stranger, in saying these few words, stood up and removed his hands from his face.

"I knew you must loathe me; I knew you must detest and hold me in abhorrence; but I almost hoped you would forgive me," said that unhappy man, in a tone of despair; and sitting down again, he passed his hands once more over his eyes, as if to shut out his niece's involuntary look of disgust.

For one moment May was tempted to leave the room in contemptuous silence; and then she had to struggle hard against the proud and angry spirit which prompted her to pour out a torrent of stinging reproaches on the fratricide. But she thought upon *Him* who but a few minutes before had passed beneath her eyes, preaching peace and mercy and pardon unto men, and she checked the movement. She remembered how He from the very cross had pardoned all His enemies. His "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," seemed to ring in her ears, and she resolved that she also would pardon, and not coldly or by halves, but fully, generously, and without conditions, even as He had done when He said to the repentant thief: "This day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise;" and, promptly answering to the inspiration, she flung her arms around her uncle's neck, exclaiming:

"I will forgive you—I do forgive you; and I pray you to pardon me, for I have been very guilty in my thoughts of you."

John Netterville made no reply. This very unexpected answer to his appeal roused all of good and human feeling that yet lived within him, and, completely thrown off his guard by the suddenness of his niece's movement, he burst into tears.

"Oh, hush, hush," cried May, kneeling down beside him, and unconsciously kissing his hand, so moved was she to behold that strong man sobbing like a child. "Do not weep so sadly; I pray you not to weep so sadly. He is happy; they are happy—they are praying for us even now; and the love which on earth they felt for us both, they are at this very moment communicating to us for each other. Is it not so, dear uncle? for do I not begin to feel that you are my father's brother? and do you not likewise feel that I am your brother's child?"

"I feel that you are an angel of pity and of peace to me—I who have sinned so deeply against you. Yes, even more against you than against any other, although you are too generous to reproach me with the ill-treatment."

Unconsciously May put her hand to her forehead. There was still a slight scar upon her brow. The squire had made good his threat—she felt she should carry his mark to her dying day.

"To lift my hands against a woman! and my own niece, too! But I did not know then who you were, and, without doubt, God permitted my ignorance, in order to make me more fully the instrument of my own chastisement. Not until long afterwards, when I heard you to speak to Daniel in the cavern, did I know that you, or he, or my mother," he added, almost convulsively, "were yet in existence. From the hour when my own wickedness drove them from their home, I had no communication with them, or with any other member of my family."

"But why were you there at all?" asked May, suddenly yielding to a curiosity she had often felt upon the subject of the squire's presence in the chapel cave. "Why were you there? for you sent the soldiers to the other cave."

"Both were to have been occupied; but the sea ran so high they were afraid of entering the one into which I, more prompt in decision, had run my boat an hour or two before; they imagined, however, to make good their entrance into the other, and, in exploring it, they came upon the secret passage, by which it communicated with the Dead Man's Cave, of which I myself was not aware."

"But when you discovered who he was, of whom you were in pursuit, why did you not warn him of his danger?"

"I knew it was too late. The whole island was surrounded, and the affair had been put into the hands of a man who, as you saw yourself, knew not what it was to pardon or to pity. Still I shuddered to appear as the murderer of my brother, and so I thought I would linger in the Mass cavern until all was over. In my horror and agitation, I quite forgot the spring-tide, and when I did remember, it was too late—my boat had disappeared, taken, probably, by some of the people in the hurry of departure, and as a last hope of safety I climbed the altar; but I put out my shoulder in doing so."

May Netterville groaned; the whole scene of that woful day passed so vividly before her imagination that all her old feelings revived, and she withdrew her hand; but remembering him whose example she was trying to imitate, she repressed the impulse, and once more replaced it in that of her uncle. Slight as had been the movement, he felt it, guessed its meaning, and sighed as he said:

"You forgive me, May, because it is your duty, but you do not, you cannot love me; no one will ever love me any more."

"Do not say so—indeed, indeed, I will love you," May answered earnestly; "and there are others who will love you better: you have a wife, a child."

"No," said the squire, groaning, "she is dead, and the child has learned to shudder at the sight of his guilty father."

"Dead! Good God!" cried May, "I never saw her; but they told me she was so young and so fair."

"And she was both young and very fair. And God is my witness that I loved her truly, and she loved me also until that fatal day. Oh, my God! May Netterville, how I have been punished; and how He has made my crime to be my chastisement! The brother whom I murdered, not because I hated him, but because I hated the religion of which he was a minister. And I hated it, May, now I must confess it, only because of its just denunciations against those who deserted from its holiness and truth. And the mother whose heart I have broken. And now, at last, my wife, the mother of my only child—oh, that was the worst of all! To know that I was loathed by one who had so loved me—that she now shrank from my caresses, who used to smile so brightly at the very hearing of my footsteps—to see her grow pale, and languid, and lifeless in the untold horrors of her soul—to feel she was withering away in the poisonous atmosphere of my guilt; and, at last, to watch her dying, and not in my arms—for even in the death agony I saw her struggle with the terror which the very touch of the fratricide imparted, and I would not add to the anguish of that hour; so she died in peace, believing herself alone; little dreaming of the guilty wretch who lay gasping on the floor of her chamber, and who would gladly—how gladly!—have exchanged places with any one of the victims of his crimes."

"And the child, the poor child!" cried May, wringing her uncle's hands in her strong sympathy with his woe.

"It was all the same—he had marked his mother's brow grow pale as I looked upon her, and her voice to quiver as she answered my inquiries, and so he learned to do the like! And unused as he is to tears, and almost too old for them (for the boy is nearly ten years of age) he almost screamed himself into fits when I took leave of him over the grave of his mother." May thought the agitation of the father, and the place which he had chosen for their parting scene, might have had something to say to his terror, and she ventured to suggest it to her uncle; but he only shook his head.

"The mother's mantle has fallen upon the child—my son

fears and hates me. But it is no matter, for I shall never see him more. To-morrow I enter a convent of the Carmelites, and the rest of my days will be spent in complying with your request, May. The last half of my life will be spent in weeping over the first."

"Then you have abandoned your child."

"No, May Netterville. I have not abandoned, I have but left him in better hands—I have confided him to you."

"To me?" said the wondering May.

"See here," said the squire, "is a document signed by me, in which, under age as you are yourself, I have given to you the entire guardianship of my child. No one but myself has a right to interfere with your authority, and that right I resign entirely to you; and here is another deed, securing to you the whole Netterville estates, to which I have no real claim. I have assigned you a guardian, because such was needful in the eye of the law; but he has promised to interfere in nothing, and to leave you as much mistress of your property as if he were not in existence."

"I am young for such a charge," said May, unconsciously speaking her thoughts aloud.

"You are young in years, but if I have read your soul aright you will do your duty nobly. Take this paper, which will make you but mistress of your own. I have reserved nothing for my son—he is a beggar on the face of the earth, as the child of a bloodstained renegade should be."

"I cannot accept of it—it is impossible," said May, resolutely; "however much I may admire such repentance, I cannot consent to be a gainer by it."

"You cannot help yourself," said her uncle. "This is but a copy—the original deed is in the hands of the lawyers who drew it up."

"But surely," remonstrated May, "you have no right to will away from your son, however the property was obtained. He is now your heir."

"I have every right—the property is not entailed; and this is but an act of simple justice. Think you such ill-gotten wealth would prosper my child? Believe me, it is only by removing it from him that I hope to free him from that terrible judgment which avenges the crime of the parents on the children, even to the third and fourth generations. And now, daughter and niece of my murdered brethren, let me hear you say once more that you forgive me!"

This time May murmured her pardon through tears of real tenderness and pity—it may be even of admiration for the heroism of soul which thus proportioned its penitence to the greatness of its crimes. Earnestly, also, she promised love and protection to her little cousin; and the unhappy man, having once more wrung her hand, abruptly quitted the apartment.

For a few seconds after his departure May stood like a statue, revolving the past and future in her soul. In these few seconds her prompt and energetic mind had seized upon all the bearings of her position, and laid down the whole plan of her future life—the education of her cousin in the religion of his forefathers—the resignation of the property into his hands as soon as he had arrived at years of discretion, and her own subsequent entire renunciation of, and retirement from, the world. How well and religiously she adhered to that plan it is easy to conceive; for hers was peculiarly one of those happy characters with whom to will and to do is almost one and the same thing. While still rapt in deep thought, she left the room, walked to that occupied by Agnese, placed the packet received from the squire in Lady Oranmore's hands, and said, like one awakening from a dream:

"Grandmamma, you asked me but a minute ago what good He did, when borne in the Blessed Sacrament through the streets below? and now I can answer your question, for my enemy has been here, and I have forgiven him."

"Your enemy, dear May?"

"John Netterville, the murderer of my father and my mother, and of one who was even more than father or than mother unto me."

"John Netterville! and here!"

"He has but this moment left the house."

Lady Oranmore, who knew her grandmother's strong feelings and unyielding will, looked upon her, astonishment mingling with admiration. "Then you have forgiven him! My child, you have acted nobly. Well, I knew it was a difficult, almost I had called it an impossible deed."

"It would have been either or both, had I not lately been kneeling before Him in the sacrament of His love. But the recollection of Him and of His abundant forgiveness of His enemies, so softened my heart that the task was easy."

"Now, indeed, dear May," said Lady Oranmore, affectionately embracing her grandchild, "I am willing to confess that He did not walk through the streets in vain."

Agnese started from the sofa, and threw herself at her grandmother's feet. So quick was the movement, there was no time either to foresee or prevent it.

"Oh, grandmamma, you believe in His eucharistic reality—you say Him! Then you will belong to the Church where only He is to be found in the sacrament of His love?"

"I do—I will, my precious one," whispered Lady Oranmore, clasping Agnese to her bosom and weeping like a child.

May saw that the effort had been too much for Agnese; so she gently untwined Lady Oranmore's arms from around her, and laid her on the couch.

"Go you with her to the church," whispered Lady Oranmore; "I will follow soon; at present I would be alone."

She left the room, and there was a long pause, during which May hung anxiously over her pale sister.

"May," whispered the latter, as soon as she had breath to speak, "you have made her a Catholic."

But May shook her head.

"I think, dear Agnese, you have done more with your quiet love, than I with my vehement and impetuous nature. I would I knew how you did learn to love Him so!"

"I think I can tell you" said Agnese, hesitating; "at least in part."

"Do, dearest, if it will not weary you; for you are quite as much a mystery to me, with your deep and holy thoughts, as I fear my fiery ones sometimes make me be to you."

"I should like to tell," said Agnese: "it would be a kind of a relief to me, for I have been thinking very much about it this morning, and it almost seems as if my thoughts went back of themselves to things I had nearly forgotten, and to the very beginning of my love for Jesus. I remember the first time I ever thought about it; I was a very little child, and I asked what was my name. Benita said it was Agnese, and that Agnese meant lamb, and that Jesus also was called a lamb; and so, as my name was the name of Jesus, I ought always to try and be resembling to Him. And I asked how that might be; and she said that lambs were gentle creatures, and very meek, and so, therefore, I ought to be meek likewise; and from that time I did try very hard to be meek, and never to make the least movement like impatience; but still I could not help feeling very sad, because people used to call me poor Agnese, and poor blind child, and I knew, therefore, it was a misfortune to be blind; and this made me weep sadly, that I could not see. The children would also talk to me of seeing this or seeing that, and I could not see at all; but I could hear them play, and laugh, and run, around me, and to feel so lonely in the midst of their merry romps, and so sad, that the tears were often in my eyes whether I would or no. Sometimes, also, the little ones who did not know me, came to ask me to join in the games, but the others would check them, and say: 'Hush! that is blind Agnese; she cannot play about as we do; do not remind her of her misfortune.' They did not mean me to hear them; but I could not help doing so. At other times it has happened that ill-natured children have mocked me for the blindness which the others pitied. I could not cry then; it would have been a relief if I could; but I felt too desolate to cry. Still I did not answer them unkindly. I tried rather to be kinder to them than before, for I had not forgotten that Jesus was meek, and that, to be like Him, I must be meek likewise. One day my grandmamma, Benita, said

to me: 'Agnese, my little one, come with me; I am going to see some nuns, who love the Lamb very much indeed, and who pray night and day before Him.' 'Do they see Him, grandmamma?' I asked; for I did not then know whether He were visible or invisible to those who had eyes for other things. 'They see Him in the Blessed Sacrament, in which He dwells upon our altars, my child,' replied Benita. I was very glad to think I should see those who lived with the Lamb, and could tell me what the Lamb was like; and so I went with Benita to the convent where Lady Oranmore took me just before we left Naples. Though I was such a very little child, I remember that first visit just as if it took place yesterday. Benita talked for a long time with the superiors; but I was thinking so much of the Lamb, and so longing to go visit the altar where they always prayed before Him, that I did not much attend to what they were saying. At last one of the nuns asked me if I would come to the church. 'Is the Lamb there?' I asked, quite innocently; 'because if He is, I should like to go.' 'Yes, my child, the Lamb is ever on our altar,' replied the nun. Directly I heard that, I gave her my hand, and very joyfully accompanied her to the church. When we approached the altar, the air felt very warm; she told it was the immense number of lights burning upon it that made it so; and leading me to the side of one of the adorers of the hour, whispered, 'kneel down, my child, the Lamb is before you, on His altar-throne.' I knelt down—all was so calm, so solemn, and so still, I felt as if I had entered heaven. It was, indeed, as though Jesus Himself was at my side, speaking a new language to my heart, and stealing all His sweetness over it. I did not say anything to Him, or ask anything of Him; I only felt that He was near, and that was joy enough for me. By degrees the quiet happiness grew more quiet, and the calm feeling calmer still; and I suppose, continued Agnese, making evidently a great effort to overcome her reluctance to speak upon the subject, 'I suppose I fell asleep—for all that followed must surely have been a dream. I thought I was still kneeling between His two adorers at the altar—'

"Agnese," interrupted May, "did you think you saw them then?"

"At the moment I thought I did. But it is all now like a vision, the memory of which has passed away, as is so often the case with dreams, and I cannot tell you in the least what they were like. I only remember feeling that I might have thought those figures cut in stone; they were so unbreathing and so still, had not something about them seemed to say that though the bodies were so motionless, the living souls within were wide awake, and full of life bowed down before the 'Holy of holies,' and only silent from intensity of love!"

"Agnese, you must have seen them," cried May; "you describe them to the very life, just as I saw them yesterday at the convent."

Agnese's pale face flushed a little—"I do not know, May, how that could be, as I have said it was all a dream and mystery to me. After I had watched these mute adorers for a few minutes in silence, a lady seemed to stand beside me; I do not know how or from whence she came, but there she was, a lamb in her arms, and her eyes fixed upon me, until I felt their soft, sweet glances penetrate my soul."

"Did you see her, too, Agnese?"

"I cannot tell you, May," replied Agnese, with a little uneasiness in her voice and manner. "I can only tell you that I felt as if a vision of beauty were at my side; and while I yet knelt in awful admiration, her voice fell on my ear. May! only to hear one tone of a voice like hers would make a paradise of the most desolate heart upon earth."

"And what said the Mother of the Lamb? for surely it was she who showed herself to your sleeping fancies."

"'Nam sake of Jesus, what would you have?' It was thus she spoke—and then, as if she had read the instant thought of my heart, she added: 'that you may see? On! see it not. Rather pray that the light may be given to your soul, which has been withheld by infinite wisdom from your body; for

though with your corporal vision you might behold His sacramental presence, still it is by the eye of faith, never refused even to the poor blind child, that man is taught to see Him there, as the angels do in heaven, in His divinity and His glorified humanity. Child of sorrow, I am your mother!—the mother of all the children of sorrow, as I am of Him who took their afflictions on Himself—all their afflictions. Not a pain of body or of mind that His creatures are given to endure, which He Himself did not first make sacred and consecrate in His own person. For in the spirit He was made desolate and full of anguish—and in the body, from the crown of His head to the sole of His foot, the words of the prophecy were accomplished to the full, and there was not a sound spot left about Him—no, not one single spot without its separate and distinct allotment of woe.

"I have told you, May," continued Agnese, "that the voice of the lady was very sweet—so sweet, it was like being in paradise only to sit and hear it. And sweeter and sweeter it seemed to grow as she proceeded—sweeter and sweeter yet. But oh! so sad. And when she spoke about His woe, it moved my very soul to tears, filling and steeping it, as it were, in her own sorrow; and then, for the first time, I came to comprehend how she, like the Blessed One of whom she spoke, kept all the unmingled bitterness of her chalice to herself, giving only of its more soft and soothing sadness to her children. Yet, would you believe it, May?—even at that moment the thought crossed my mind—and a wicked one it was for such a moment—that if He had endured all other woes, He had not taken mine upon Himself! It was but a passing thought, repented of almost as soon as I was conscious of it. But, as before, the lady answered to that thought.

"Yes, Agnese, of Him it may be truly said that He saw and that He saw not. For you and with you He was blind, indeed; and yet, because of you, and even for your very sake, He refused not Himself the faculty of seeing. Blind He was to your sins; blind to all consolations of heaven or earth—closing His eyes even to His divinity—one glance at which would have robbed His cross of its ignominy—His passion of its woe. But blind He was not to those who passed beneath His cross, wagging their heads in cold derision; and He opened them wide and fixed them unshrinkingly on the mangled humanity in which He was atoning for the crimes of the scoffers; nor did He refuse them to look upon His mother. He was, indeed, a very prodigal of His woe—not merely content to drink up the chalice which His Father gave Him, but rather sipping it, as it were, drop by drop, that He might more fully taste and savor all its bitterness; and therefore it was, Agnese, that He would not lose His sight, since by that very sight He could draw suffering to His soul. And now, my child, you need not speak, for I know your thoughts. You will gladly suffer with Jesus and as Jesus wills. Bow down, then, your heart, and bow down your very soul, and receive Him into your arms, and learn of Him, who was not alone a victim—but a willing victim—offered solely because He willed it."

"Dearest May," added Agnese, after a little pause of thoughtful recollection, "she had read my thoughts aright. So I bowed myself down body and soul, and held out my arms and received the Lamb-child, Jesus in them. He did not seem to stay there, but rather to sink into my very heart of hearts, and penetrate it so in sweetness that I felt quite dissolving in love and joy. Tears rushed into my eyes; and though I could not speak, it seemed as if my spirit said to Mary; 'O sweetest lady, leave Him with me thus, and never again will I ask to do aught but suffer.' And Mary answered, with a heavenly gladness in her voice: 'He is yours, Agnese; only try and will as He wills, and believe, never, in joy or in sorrow, will He cease to make His dwelling in your heart.' I awoke, dear May,—quite awake, when she said these words: for the nun touched me on the shoulder, and we left the chapel. But always since that day He is ever in my heart; and though I do not see Him, I feel Him there. And now, if I could see, I would not see; and if by a miracle my eyes were to be opened to the light, I would close them again, and never open them, if I could help it until

I was in heaven. For I would not willingly look upon thing or creature, however beautiful or however blest, before I had rejoiced in the vision of my God. And I shall see Him soon, dear May—soon, although not quite yet. But soon—very soon—it will be now, as I think and hope."

"Why, Agnese, you surely do not mean to go to heaven and leave us all just yet," said May, trying to laugh through the tears that were choking her.

"I am sure I shall not live long, May. I know well I have been dying ever since I left Naples; only, at first I was dying slow, and now I am dying fast. Do not cry, dearest May—do not cry so sadly."

"How can I help it, when I hear you say such terrible things? So short a time to have had a little sister, and now to lose her. No, no, Agnese, I cannot spare you yet."

Tears came into Agnese's eyes, as she answered: "To leave you, May, is almost my only sorrow: I love so much to feel that you are near me. But, though I leave, I do not lose you, nor you lose me, dear May; for then I shall love you with a double love—the love of the sister who on earth so relied upon your care, and the love of the guardian spirit, who will watch over you from heaven. And, oh! my sister, when I see Him—if I see Him—surely my first thought will be of you—my first petition for you. Never, believe me, never shall I weary of kneeling at His feet, and praying for your welfare."

Agnese looked so beautiful, as she made this promise, that May felt inspired with something of the same heavenly longing so visible on her features. She kissed her brow, and whispered in a tone which had more of exultation than of sadness in it:

"You shall go to Him when He wills it, dear one; only remember to bequeath to me your sweet and loving thoughts of Him, that I may also, for the sake of Jesus, close my eyes to all that is not Jesus, and be to Him, as you have been, a very spouse in the sacrament of His love."

"Ah!" said Agnese, "long ago the children used to call me His spousina; but I never really was so, and I never really felt so until the other day."

"The other day! What do you mean, Agnese?" replied May, struck by the peculiar expression of her sister's countenance.

"I was His spouse," whispered Agnese, "on the day when He came to me in the sacrament of His love, for then I promised to be His and His alone. And I don't mean half His, but wholly and entirely His own; as in life, so to be faithful even unto death. Yes, May," continued the blind child, making a great and evident effort to speak her secret, "I promised Him faithfully—oh! so faithfully—to be His; not only His, a child, but His, a woman. I asked Him, indeed, to take me away directly; but if He chose to leave me here, I said I would live but for His love. So you see that was really my spousal day; and soon He will come and take me to Himself, and then I shall be with Him as His spouse indeed."

"Agnese, but you should not have done this without asking."

"I did not intend it, May; but that instant it seemed as if I were so entirely *His own*, that it was the most natural thing in the world to do; and then," Agnese added, "it is no great matter, for I shall not live to the trial. He is coming to take me away soon."

"I know not that—I know that!" said May, clinging, as human nature often does, to the expression of a hope which yet it does not feel. "The doctors say there is no disease, and where there is no disease, surely it is impossible not to hope."

"Do not hope, my sister; the doctors do not know how entirely I have offered my life to Him."

"But He may not accept the offering," answered May; "or He may receive it in another sense, giving you now to live, in order that, at a later period, you may consecrate to Him, in very deed, what now you have only given in desire."

"No, May, do not deceive yourself; I feel that He has accepted the offering in the sense and spirit in which I made it; the hand of death is upon me, dearest. It is true I have no disease, but—"

And May long remembered afterwards how the child had unconsciously laid her hand on her heart, in concluding the sentence :

"It is as if He Himself were stealing away my life."

May made no answer ; she was weeping bitterly.

"May," said Agnese, after a silence of some minutes, "what are you doing?"

"Making a wreath of white roses for the novice whose clothing takes place next week at the Convent of the Perpetual Adoration."

"May, could you not make another for her, and give me that one?"

"You shall have it, dearest."

"And May," continued Agnese, feebly, "I wish you would change my dress, and put on me the one I wore when He came to me for the first time." May put aside the roses, which were all besprinkled with her tears ; and she had soon wrapt her sister in the spotless folds of a white muslin wrapping-dress, and parted her soft, shining hair upon her brow, and smoothed the long curls upon either side ; but when was about to crown them with her white roses, Agnese put aside the wreath and said :

"Not just yet, dearest May, wait until He comes to take me away, for then I would be dressed as a bride, indeed, and brides always wears a wreath of flowers, Benita says. Ah ! here is Francesco," she added, with a happy smile, as her ear caught the sound of the old man's footsteps on the corridor without.

* * * *

The poor children lingering near the church of the Blessed Sacrament crowded around Agnese, as Francesco lifted her from the carriage. Many of them had known, and loved, and revered her, even as a poor blind child ; and now, in her better fortunes it was one of Agnese's sweetest pleasures to repay their former kindness by a thousand little generousities, as well as by the tenderest interest in all that concerned them. No wonder, therefore, they now crowded round her, saying to each other, in their great delight at her reappearance among them—"It is Blind Agnese ; how glad I am she is not too weak to come ; and now that she is once in the open air again, our *sposina* will grow as strong as she was before the foreign lady took her to that cold land, where the sun, she says, never shines so brightly as it shines on us."

"You must pray for me very much to-night, dear little ones," said Agnese, pausing ere she ascended the steps of the church, in order to distribute her presents among them. "These are the last gifts I shall ever bring you."

Francesco took her in his arms, and carried her into the church, for she was too weak to walk so far.

"Where Columba died, there let me pray for the last time," she whispered ; and, in compliance with the wish, the kind old man carried her as nearly as he could to the altar upon which the Blessed Sacrament reposed.

There she knelt down—she *would* kneel down, she said, as it was for the last time. So May knelt down beside her, and put her arm round her waist. She had grown so feeble, that without this assistance she could not have knelt upright. The service began, and May felt Agnese lean every moment more heavily upon her, as if every moment she lost more and more the power of self-support. Once or twice she whispered—"You are weary, darling ;" but the child did not seem to hear her, and May desisted, for she did not like to disturb her more than was needful. "It is for the last time," thought she, "and so it is no matter." Something, indeed, seemed to say to her that there was no hope, and that the child was dying fast. Suddenly she felt her sinking from her grasp ; it was at the very instant when the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament was given, and with a calm courage that afterwards seemed strange to her, she put both her arms round the dying child and clasped her tightly to her bosom, until that sweet and solemn blessing had been given. For worlds she would not have deprived Agnese of *His* benediction at such a moment. When it was over, she made a sign

to Francesco, who soon saw how the matter stood, and carried Agnese into the open air.

"Is she dead?" whispered May, turning in her anguish to the old man for comfort.

"No," he replied in the same tone, "but I greatly fear me she is dying."

"What shall I do? The movement of the carriage will kill her outright. Look up, my own darling—for God's sake, look up," said May, sitting down upon the church steps, and receiving her dying sister from Francesco's arms.

"If the signora does not mind," said Francesco, "there is a cottage close at hand, where I live ; it is but a poor place, but I could easily carry her so far."

"Oh, never mind about that," said May, impatiently ; "let us carry her there at once, and then I will go and fetch my grandmother."

Agnese had by this time opened her eyes, and a bright smile passed over her face as she listened to this little conversation.

"Yes, yes," she whispered, "the poorer the better. For He was poor, and had no place whereon to lay His head." She looked yet more pleased when they carried her into the little room, and she heard Francesco saying to her sister :

"The signora must excuse my poverty ; yonder heap of Indian straw is all the bed I have to offer to her sister."

May, however, could not resist a sigh, while she smoothed down the poor couch, and covered it over as well as she could with a velvet mantle which Francesco brought up from the carriage. Upon this they laid Agnese ; but the child looked distressed, and tears rushed into her eyes.

"W. at is it, my own darling?" asked May, her quick eye detecting in an instant the emotion of her sister.

"He died upon a cross ; and would you have me go to Him on velvet?" whispered the child ; for she had detected in an instant the soft nature of the material upon which she was lying.

To many this might have seemed childlike and of little meaning, but happily May could comprehend the feeling which made this child, who in her life had been so devoted to her divine Lord, anxious to resemble Him even in His death. She made a sign, therefore, to Francesco, and while he once more raised Agnese, she gently removed the velvet mantle, so little in union with the poor bed it covered. The child looked pleased at this new arrangement ; but just as he laid her down again, some other thought appeared to strike her, and she asked in what direction stood the church.

"It is just behind," Francesco answered, wondering a little at the question.

"Dearest May," she said imploringly, "could you not put me the other way, with my face towards the church?"

"For what purpose, dear one? It will only fatigue you, and God knows you are ill and weak enough already."

"To what purpose ! O May, how can you ask ? That I may turn my sightless eyes towards Him, and feel that His are bent lovingly upon me. Thank you, thank you, my own May," she added, as her sister silently re-arranged her pillow in the direction in which she wished it to be placed. "Now, indeed, I feel that I am dying at His feet."

"Will you stay and watch her?" said May, with difficulty suppressing her heavy sobs. "I must go and break this news to her grandmother. I dare not trust it to the servants to acquaint her with such sorrow."

Francesco willingly undertook the office, and May drove back rapidly to Naples. Lady Oranmore listened to her sad story, but she could not bring herself to believe that all would indeed be soon over as was apprehended by May, and the latter had not the heart to argue the matter with her. "She will know it soon enough," thought she ; and while waiting the arrival of the physicians who had been summoned to attend, she left her grandmother, and went and sat down sorrowfully in that room which Agnese had so lately quitted, and which she felt the child would never again enter, except as a corpse. Here the half-finished wreath of roses caught her

eye, and remembering the request of Agnese, she took it up, and to her tears tell fast all the while among its flowers, resolutely set to work, and succeeded in completing it before she had to attend Lady Oranmore and the physicians to the cottage of Francesco. They found the child evidently sinking fast, and one glance at her was sufficient for the medical men, who unanimously declared that she had not an hour to live. This opinion was given to Lady Oranmore in so loud a whisper, that May was certain the child must have heard it, and fearing the effects of so sudden announcement upon her, she turned towards her sister. Agnese was smiling brightly, and May felt she had both heard the fiat, and that the consequences were somewhat different from any which might have been expected in a similar case. She knelt down and kissed her forehead saying, although it seemed so needless to ask the question:

"You are happy, dear one?"

"Yes, dear May," she whispered in return; "but it was not for that I smiled."

"For what was it then, Agnese?"

"I was but smiling to think how they are mistaken, May."

"Do you, then, think you are not dying?" cried May, eagerly; so willing was she to take hope, even from the thoughts of the poor child about herself.

"I am dying, May, but not so fast as they imagine. Tomorrow will be the Feast of the Sacred Heart, and I shall die then, and not before."

May was silent; she felt disappointed, though quite conscious how idle it would have been to have founded any expectations upon the fancies of a dying child. But she checked her rising sobs, for Agnese was speaking once again.

"May, do you remember what you once read for me about Elizabeth?"

"What, dearest?" replied May, vaguely, unable at the moment to think of anything but Agnese herself.

"Why, about all the little singing-birds, that sang so sweetly, so sweetly round her pillow, when she was dying."

"I remember now," said May.

"I do not want *them*," replied Agnese, with a peculiar expression in her voice. "The *Dove* is the only bird I would care to have."

"You will soon have your wish," said May, as she now comprehended what Agnese wanted; "Padre Giovanni is at the door; Francesco went for him as soon as I returned."

It needed no long time to arrange the conscientious affairs of the pure-hearted child; and when the assistants were once more admitted into the chamber, the Padre told May to prepare, as well as she could, a temporary altar for the reception of the Blessed Sacrament, which he was about to bring from the church, and administer as a viaticum to her sister. Aided by Francesco, May had soon accomplished this task, lighted a couple of wax candles, and made what other preparations shortness of time and the poverty of the place would admit of. Afterwards she arranged the folds of Agnese's spotless dress, smoothed once more, and for the last time, the shining curls that she loved so well, laid (and this time the child did not withdraw it) the wreath of white roses upon them, and then took her usual place at the pillow of the invalid. Benita also knelt down by her nursing; but Lady Oranmore could not trust herself so near, so she went and sat at the open window. Agnese was now lying as one in a deep sleep, her eyes closed, and her hand folded on her bosom, but May knew well that this stillness, which seemed like slumber, was in truth but the very depth and quiet of her prayer; so she also prayed beside her. For some time the room was wrapped in silence, only broken by the heavy sobs of Lady Oranmore, and even these became fewer and fainter by degrees; for the calmness of those around Agnese seemed to rebuke her less uncomplaining sorrow—something, too, there was in the look and temperature of the evening which carried back her recollections to that of the preceding twelvemonth, soothing even while it deepened her sadness.

Just such a night as the one on which she had first made the acquaintance of Agnese, was this on which she was now to take leave of her forever; and the same Jesus, whom then the child had followed so devoutly, was now coming Himself to visit her in turn. Lady Oranmore dwelt upon this memory until it almost seemed to her as if the visit of her Divine Lord, which, to any other, would have been an act of incomprehensible charity, was more like a deed of justice to this poor child, who so often in her short lifetime had followed in His footsteps. Just as this thought crossed her mind, the hymn of the Blessed Sacrament rose up through the open window, falling, in the midst of the solemn stillness of the hour, upon the hearts of all who heard it like a strain from heaven; an instant afterwards a

sweet, low voice had joined itself to the melody. It was not in the streets below, and May instinctively turned down Agnese—it was as she had suspected, the child was singing in an undertone probably quite unconsciously to herself. May was about to check her, fearing the exertion might hasten death; but she thought of the singing birds of St. Elizabeth, and refrained. Francesco now opened the door, and Agnese ceased to sing. "Hush!" she whispered, "He is coming." May thought she looked as if she were already with Him in heaven. The Blessed Sacrament was placed on the temporary altar prepared by May; Lady Oranmore fell on her knees, and her agitation became too great to admit of her attending very closely to the ceremonies which followed. But all was at length concluded, and for a long time after Agnese had received her Divine Lord in the Blessed Sacrament unbroken silence reigned in the apartment. At last the clock struck eleven; May started; she remembered her sister's words, and she felt Agnese press the hand she held in hers. The half-hour struck, and then the quarter. "It is time now," Agnese murmured; "I am going, May. Let me bid my grandmother good-bye." In obedience to this wish, May led her grandmother to the bed. Agnese first embraced the sobbing Benita, then, as Lady Oranmore folded her to her heart, she seemed to collect all her remaining strength to say, as earnestly as she could: "Grandmother, if you would die happy, you must die in the Church which alone can give you Jesus for the comfort of that hour." Lady Oranmore turned away in speechless sorrow, and May bent in her turn over the dying child. "I love you best of all," Agnese whispered, "and so I say to you: Love Him, and Him alone, and never creatures excepting for His sake."

"Never!" answered May firmly, after a moment's thought; and she kept her word.

"May," continued the child, in an almost inarticulate whisper, "had I lived, I should have hoped to serve Him in the Perpetual Adoration."*

"Pray, dear one, that I may be an adorer in your place."

A bright smile passed over the features of Agnese, and for some time she lay quite still; but again some disquieting thought cast its shadow over the serene beauty of her brow, and she tried to lift her hand towards her head.

"What is it, dearest?" May whispered through her tears.

"His head was crowned with thorns, and she! I die wreathed in flowers!" she said, in a voice barely a whisper.

"Content you, dear one. There are thorns even among roses."

Agnese thanked her by a smile—such a smile as a seraph might have brought from heaven, and then she unfolded her arms from her bosom, and stretched them out until she lay like one extended on a cross. Her sister thought at first it was only a convulsive movement, and tried to re-fold the arms; but for once the gentle child resisted, and May then knew why she had altered her position; for Agnese whispered—"It was so He died;" and in that attitude, which love alone could have dictated to her heart, she waited for *His Hour*. How May dreaded the next tolling of the clock! something in her own heart seeming to say it would indeed be the signal for the coming of the Bridegroom. It knelt at last upon her reluctant ear. The feast of the Sacred Heart was come indeed; but for yet a moment longer Agnese lay quite still, her pale face growing brighter and brighter in her celestial joy, until it almost seemed as if a visible light were shedding radiance on her brow. Suddenly she started up—"Francesco!" she cried, in a clear low voice, "The Dove!" Even as she spoke, she extended wide her arms, and opened her eyes; and, oh! the light, the intelligence, the love that filled those once sightless orbs, as she fixed them (so it seemed to the beholders) on some object directly above her. But *whether* she saw, or *what* she saw, is a secret only known to herself and to her God, for while yet in that attitude of rapt devotion, without a word, without a sigh, she gave back her pure spirit to Him who had been the object of its ceaseless desires, and her lifeless form sank down upon the pillow, with arms still outstretched to the semblance of that cross upon which He had died for the love of her. The soul of Agnese was with her God, and she was dead!

* The Convent of the Perpetual Adoration. This devotion was intended for the express purpose of repairing the neglect, incredulity, and insult continually offered our Divine Saviour in His Eucharistic presence; and in those convents where it is established, the nuns kneel in rotation, two and two, hour after hour, before the altar, thus realizing (as much as creatures may) our dream of heaven, and emulating in their ceaseless prayer these mysterious creatures, who "rest not night or day," saying, "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, who was, and who is, and who is to come."

TRUE TO TRUST;

OR

THE STORY OF A PORTRAIT.

'All common things, each day's events,
That with the hour begin and end,
Our pleasures and our discontents,
Are rounds by which we may ascend.'
—*Longfellow.*

CHAPTER I.

The sun shone brightly through the leaves of the forest; it spread a gleam of light across solitary glens, danced gaily over the little brooks that murmured through the valleys, and lit up many a pleasant nook in beautiful Devon, on the 1st of May 1593. One of its rays, like an angel of charity, penetrated the casement of a cottage situated in the outskirts of the ancient city of Exeter. The stream of light passed across the face of a girl of about fourteen, and rested on the pale, worn countenance of a woman lying on a bed, from which it was evident she was destined never to rise. The eyes of the child had been fixed, with sorrowful earnestness, on the face of her dying mother; but now she rose and drew a curtain across the antique bow-window, to exclude the sunbeam which she feared would fatigue those eyes which were soon to be closed in death.

At that moment the latch of the door was gently raised, and a respectable, kind-looking woman entered.

'How is your mother, Catherine?' said the new-comer.

The poor child raised her tearful eyes to the woman, and with difficulty answered her, saying she feared her dear mother was dying.

Both approached the bedside. The kind neighbor, leaning over the dying woman, said, in a soft tone:

'Can I do anything for you, my good Martha?'

'My daughter! my poor little daughter!' murmured the sufferer. 'Will you, as you promised me last week, see that, when I am dead, she is taken to her father's relations, and that what little I possess shall not be taken from her? It is a long way to Penzance, and you will not let her go alone?'

'Make your mind easy, my good friend. She shall remain with me until I find some trustworthy person to take her to her aunt.'

A smile of content passed over the features of the departing mother. 'May God reward you!' she said. Then, after a moment's silence, she added: 'Now, if I could see the priest.'

In those days it was not easy to find a priest, and Catholics were often deprived in their last hour of the consoling presence of the minister of God; but on the present occasion Catherine knew there was one near.

'I will go for Father Ralph,' she said; 'he is still at Master Andrews', the clothier, where he said Mass last Sunday.' And she hastily left the cottage. In about half an hour she returned, accompanied by a most benevolent-looking person. As he entered the sick woman's room, her whole countenance lighted up with a look of content, almost of happiness. 'Thank God! thank God!' she exclaimed.

All the rites of the Catholic Church were administered to her. Consoling were the words of the charitable priest as he prepared the departing soul to appear before its Creator; and it was touch-

ing to see the poor child, so soon to be an orphan, repressing the violence of her sorrow that the last moments of her mother might be calm and undisturbed.

Here we must pause in our narrative to give a brief sketch of the early history of Martha Tresize. She was the daughter of a respectable Irish farmer, residing in the county Cork. Near his farm stood the mansion of a Catholic gentleman, to whose only daughter, Agnes, Martha was foster-sister. The two children were constantly together, and at last it was settled that Martha should live entirely with Agnes, who had no other companion. They received together a plain education; for in those days young ladies devoted less time to accomplishments, and more to the practical duties of housekeeping.

When the girls were about eighteen years old, Agnes' maternal grandfather, a Devonshire nobleman, died, and, leaving no male heir, all his estates devolved on his daughter. The family therefore left Ireland to reside on their English property, which was in the vicinity of Exeter. Martha accompanied them, bidding farewell forever to her family and her country. Two years after her arrival in England she married a small but substantial farmer, named John Tresize, a native of Penzance; and shortly afterwards her foster-sister Agnes fell into so bad a state of health that her parents determined to take her back to Ireland.

With her departure began all poor Martha's troubles. When her little boy was about three years old, and Catherine an infant of ten months, her husband was accidentally killed; and as neither he nor his wife had a single relation in the county, her position was consequently desolate. Some friends now advised her to sell the farm. She did so, but at a great loss, for few have generosity enough not to take advantage of the inexperience of the person with whom they are making a bargain. Martha Tresize removed to a cottage near Exeter, and contrived to live there respectably, though in a very different position from that which she had hitherto occupied. The many comforts of her early life had ill fitted her to struggle with poverty; but she added something to her limited means by instructing the children of some well-to-do tradesmen of Exeter in needlework, embroidery, and reading.

She did not neglect her own children, but imparted to them all the solid part of the learning she had acquired; with Christian fortitude embracing all the obligations imposed upon her by her straitened circumstances, not vainly regretting the loss of that worldly prosperity which was no longer hers. Indeed, although she always retained a strong feeling of love and gratitude for her foster-sister's family, it often occurred to her that her life would have been far happier had she never been removed from her father's house and the station of life in which she was born. She tried, therefore, to form in her children habits of frugality, and to give them homely tastes and a love of order, so that it would have been difficult to have met anywhere a more industrious little housekeeper than her daughter Catherine. Michael, her son, she had placed at Andrews', the rich clothier, who, being a Catholic himself, was glad to have a Catholic apprentice. But, like many another foolish boy, Michael had a passion for a seafaring life; and permission to become a sailor being refused,

he ran away, and was supposed to have engaged himself on board an East Indiaman which sailed about that time from Exmouth. No tidings came of the runaway, and the poor sorrowing mother gave up all hope of ever seeing him again. Kind neighbors tried to console her by predicting that he would return some day a rich man, but Martha would not believe them; and as year after year passed without any news of her son, she resigned herself, with the help of prayer at the foot of the Cross, to this most afflicting bereavement.

Catherine, for the first few weeks, wept bitterly when the merry playmate and companion of her childhood returned no more as he was wont on the long looked for Saturday evenings, and the Sundays especially seemed sad without him; but in childhood sorrows are not lasting, and Catherine's tears were easily dried by the tenderness of a fond mother. From that time she became the sole object of Martha's affections. As she advanced in years she fully repaid her mother's fond care, if indeed it is possible that a child can repay the devotedness of an anxious parent; but Catherine was a good, dutiful, and loving child. Her education, and the peaceful life she led, had made her in many respects very different from most girls of her own age and position of life. Habits of self-restraint had given firmness to her character, and to her whole demeanor an air of quiet seriousness, which, however, did not prevent her from being of a most truly cheerful and happy disposition. Her mother's example taught her to have recourse to her Heavenly Father in all difficulties, and thus she was well prepared to meet trials; and her confidence in God's ever-loving Providence gave her a strength and decision of character that served her well all through her eventful life.

On Martha's death the kind neighbor who had assisted her in her last moments, took Catherine to her home, until she should find an opportunity of sending her in safety to her relations in Cornwall. Andrews, the clothier, undertook to settle all her money-matters, and to be her banker for any sum she should not wish to take with her to Cornwall.

'And I will do the best I can with it, my child,' said the worthy man. 'You must come to me for advice or assistance if you need either, for I had a great esteem for your excellent mother, and so, dear child, you must look to me as to a friend; and if you do not find your father's family kind, come back to us; my dame will be a good friend to you. We are of the same religion, you know, and must help each other, as Father Ralph says.'

All this was soothing to the feelings of the poor orphan. Many times each day she knelt before her Crucifix and, amidst tears and sobs, she exclaimed, 'Thy will be done.' At first it was with difficulty she could utter these words; but Father Ralph encouraged her to persevere; telling her that by so doing, the virtue of entire resignation to God's will would be given to her. Nor was he wrong; for soon a profound calm pervaded her soul, and made itself visible in words and actions.

At last an opportunity presented itself of sending Catherine to her relations. A respectable woman, well known to Master Andrews, was about to undertake what was then considered the perilous voyage to Penzance. This person readily agreed to take Catherine with her, and see her safely conducted to her aunt.

Poor Catherine's sad feelings can better be imagined than described, as she bade farewell to the home of her childhood, her dear mother's grave, her kind friends, and all those objects which were so familiar to her. The boat in which they were to sail was a small trading vessel that plied between Exeter and Penzance, occasionally conveying passengers. This, indeed, was the only way in which the poorer classes could go to and fro between those towns; for as the roads that traversed Devon and Cornwall were mere bridle-paths, there were then no coaches, nor even a carrier's cart. The rich traveled on horseback, accompanied by armed attendants, and even so, by reason of highwaymen, the journey was often dangerous.

At five o'clock one bright morning in the beginning of June our travelers went on board. Their luggage was piled up on the deck, and Catherine and her new friend, Dame Penrith, seated

themselves close to it. As the little craft glided slowly down the Exe, the sad young orphan kept her eyes fixed on the old city. House after house vanished from her sight; she could only see the towers of the Cathedral and the old castle of Rougemont; when these also were no longer visible, an inexpressible feeling of loneliness crept over her. She thought of her dear mother now lying in the churchyard, and her heart seemed inundated with such intense grief that, as she sobbed and wept, her whole frame trembled and seemed convulsed; but she had promised Father Ralph never to give way to these terrible bursts of sorrow, so raising her eyes to heaven she murmured, 'Thy will be done.'

She thought of all her Divine Saviour had suffered, then of God's mercy to her dear mother, and of the almost certain hope that she was now in the enjoyment of eternal happiness. Making a resolution so to live on earth as to deserve to be with that much loved mother one day in heaven, she recovered her former peace of mind.

'I say, little girl, and you, good dame, here we are at Exmouth. Why don't you look out on the sea? That is something worth looking at, much better than any of your towns.'

So spoke the captain, a rough but good-natured Cornish man. The travelers followed his advice. There stretched the ocean before them in calm grandeur, sparkling under the morning sun.

'How beautiful!' exclaimed Catherine; and for an instant her sad little face lit up with joy. She said no more, but stood motionless, leaning against the side of the boat, now gazing as far as her sight could reach, across the open sea; now watching the rippling waves as they played about the vessel. Her thoughts were of the majesty of that God who created such beautiful and magnificent works; of the mystery of eternity, of which indeed the ocean is a faint emblem; of the beauty of heaven, where she confidently hoped her mother now was; these and other thoughts arose in her mind, not in that crowding confusion which only serves to harass us, but welling gently up, then sinking deeply into her heart and filling her with a pious awe that was also very soothing.

The boat seldom kept at any great distance from the shore; Catherine could therefore see the rocks, and at times even the white cottages of some fishing-hamlet shining in the sun; and they passed many of the haunts of the smuggler and the wrecker.

Poor Dame Penrith was far from enjoying the voyage; she complained of the tossing and rocking of the vessel; every now and then she would exclaim that the ship was sinking, and at such moments would bitterly bewail her folly in having undertaken such a perilous voyage. But all her troubles ended on the afternoon of the second day of their journey, and great was her joy as the vessel entered the harbor of Penzance. Catherine also was glad to leave the ship.

The dame turned to her little charge, and inquired where her aunt lived.

'At some distance from the town, I believe,' replied Catherine.

'Then,' said her friend, 'you had better come with me to my cousin's. She will tell us the way.'

Accordingly they both proceeded to the shop of Dame Penrith's cousin. Great was the pleasure of the two old women at meeting. When the first emotion had subsided, inquiries were made about Dame Barnby's dwelling-place.

'I know her cottage well,' said Dame Penrith's cousin. 'It is betwixt this and the village of Gulval. But the child must sup with us ere she goes to her aunt.'

After supper, at which meal were served various strange Cornish pies and pastries, Catherine, thanking her friends for their kindness, departed with an old servant, who undertook to lead her to her aunt's cottage.

It was a beautiful, warm night; the moon shone brightly on our two travelers as they wended their way through the narrow and tortuous streets. Penzance was a queer little town in those days, its old timber-fronted houses with diamond-paned bow-windows projecting far into the streets.

Catherine and her companion soon found themselves in the open country. Before them lay extensive moors, bounded by

the sea; and across those moors and fens one might have ranged for miles scarcely meeting a human dwelling.

The ocean was calm; the moonbeams traced on it a silvery path, across which now and then some little fishing-boat passed, appearing like a dark spectre on the glistening waves, and soon lost sight of again in the surrounding gloom. Catherine, although weary, stood a moment to gaze on the lovely scene, and she would have remained longer, had not her companion hurried her, saying:

'We must get on quickly; they will be abed; and I have to go back to town. If you want to look at the sea, why that, child, may be seen any day.'

On they went, nor did they stop again until the old servant announced that they had reached their destination. So, bidding her young companion good night, she left her standing before a forlorn-looking cottage. Catherine, not without some feelings of anxiety, knocked at the door of her future home. The knock was answered by the loud barking of a dog, and after some delay the door was opened by a woman, the expression of whose countenance was one of mingled sorrow and discontent.

'I am Catherine Tresize, Dame Barnby's niece,' said the little visitor.

'Yes I know all about it; you have lost your mother poor child. I am your aunt, and you have come to seek a home with me. Well, I fear you will scarce find this a very comfortable one.'

They entered the cottage, which certainly looked cheerless.

'I should have come earlier and not disturbed you at this late hour,' said Catherine, 'but the kind dame who brought me from Exeter took me to her relation's house and made me sup first.'

'You did well,' replied her aunt. 'You will now like to go to bed; you must needs be tired, child.'

Catherine said she was indeed very tired. Her aunt held a light while she ascended a kind of ladder-stairs.

'You need no candle up there, the moon gives goodly light. So I wish you a quiet night.'

When Catherine opened the door opposite the ladder, she found it was indeed bright moonlight.

Having said her prayers, she was soon in bed, and a few moments after all cares and troubles were forgotten in the calm, deep sleep of youth.

Dame Barnby was in truth not very well pleased to have her niece with her; for, besides her straitened circumstances, she had important reasons for not liking to have any one except her own children living in the cottage.

Good Master Andrews, the clothier, had written to Dame Barnby. He was not, however, a skilled letter-writer; and from his epistle, which a traveling pedlar had brought her, she concluded that the young orphan was penniless and would therefore be a great burden to her.

Poor Martha Tresize would certainly never have wished her daughter to go to Penzance had she been acquainted with the altered circumstances of her sister-in-law. But her husband had frequently spoken with affection of this sister, and had remarked that, if anything happened to him and his wife, he was sure the little ones would find a home with Winifred. He had not seen her for many years, and was ignorant of the changes produced by a foolish marriage, and of the degradation and poverty into which she had fallen; for, on her part, a certain pride had prevented her from applying to him for aid, which he would have willingly given had he been aware of her misfortunes.

CHAPTER II.

WHEN it is remembered that even in the last century Cornwall, owing to its remote position and the difficulty of approach, was, in moral as well as material progress, far behind the rest of England, so that acts of wrecking and smuggling could be constantly perpetrated with impunity, the reader will be able to form some idea of the state of that county at the period of which we write.

It was thinly populated, and the lands comprised in the Duchy were little better than profitless moors. The Catholic priests had been driven out, and very frequently had not been replaced by the ministers of any other creed. The people had so fallen into a state of deplorable ignorance with respect to religion; and absurd acts of superstition had taken the place of those practices of piety which, under the enlightened guidance of their priests, the Cornish people, naturally religious, had loved to perform.

Nature had not been sparing of her gifts to Cornwall, and if, in an agricultural point of view, it was inferior to the rest of England, its mines were rich, and it abounded in wild and beautiful scenery. The situation of Penzance, on the magnificent Mount's Bay, is universally admired. This bay presents an expanse of sea such as is rarely found enclosed by headlands, in the midst of which, rising to the height of nearly two hundred feet, stands an insulated mass of rock, which bears the appellation of St. Michael's Mount. At an early period this romantic eminence was consecrated to religion; old legends assert that St. Michael appeared to some hermits upon one of its crags, and a large rock on the western side is still pointed out as the site of the vision. Edward the Confessor granted the mount to the great Benedictine house of St. Michael; later on it was transferred to the monks of the new Monastery of Sion.

But the island rock

'Whose brow

Is crown'd with castles, and whose rocky sides
Are clad with dusky ivy.'

has echoed with sounds of war as well as those of prayer.

On the side of the bay opposite to that occupied by Marazion stands the little fishing-town of Newlyn, nestled on the gently-sloping hill. After passing this place, the road, or rather bridle-path, for such it then was, wound round the rocks close above the sea, and finally led to Mousehole. About halfway between the latter and Newlyn stood, at the time of our story, an old-looking but substantially-built house, bearing the name of Ty-an-dour, which means 'dwelling by the water.' And it was well named, for it was situated on a rock overlooking the whole bay; a flight of steps, roughly hewn in the rock, leading down to the water's edge. This house was inhabited by the brothers Stephen and Mark Casterman, their old mother, and two children of Stephen. Viewed from without, Ty-an-dour had a gloomy appearance. The few tall dark pine-trees that grew close to it; the uncultivated lands, covered with gorse, which stretched for miles in its rear; the wild waves, ever dashing against the rocks beneath, seeming like monsters endeavoring to ascend the crags, yet always repulsed by some unseen agent; all these added, no doubt, to the melancholy aspect of the building itself. But let us now enter within. The large room on the ground-floor serves for both kitchen and sitting-room; its chimney advances several feet from the wall, affording ample accommodation within for two persons on each side; and here old dame Casterman used to sit spinning during the long winter evenings. A very solid oak table, a few wooden stools, and a solitary arm-chair, constituted all the furniture of the dark low room. There were cupboards and shelves in abundance; and a strange collection of things they contained: old clothes, jewelry, fishingnets and tackle; articles of value and worthless lumber were heaped together.

How this medley of goods had been obtained will be easily imagined when we state that the Castermans were renowned wreckers and smugglers. On stormy nights the lonely house often became the resort of men as daring and as worthless as themselves. Many a storm-beaten ship, allured by the false lights of the wreckers, struck against the rocks which fringed the coast on the side of Newlyn; and, while the unfortunate crew were allowed to perish the cargo was secured by these Cornish pillagers, with whom it was a saying that:

'If ye save a stranger from the sea,
Then he will turn your enemy.'

Smuggling was also carried on extensively by the inmates of Ty-an-dour. The desired booty once obtained and stowed away in caves dug for the purpose under the house, the brother wreckers and their associates would indulge for a time in feasting and

revelry. But these hours of relaxation were only of short duration; for the Castermans were not given to conviviality and therefore no great favorites with their neighbors who nevertheless rallied round them on account of their wonderful daring and their usual success in undertakings of danger.

As Stephen Casterman's wife was dead, his old mother looked after his two children; that is to say, she saw that they had enough to eat; but further than this she did not trouble herself about them. And so Patience and Antony grew from year to year in ignorance and neglect. From their earliest childhood they were accustomed to wander about alone, and to play in the boat anchored in the cove. It is a wonder no harm befell them; but there is an allseeing Providence that watches over those whom none protect or care for; and these poor children were certainly of the number.

At the same time as Catherine, after her arrival at her aunt's house, was pouring forth her soul in earnest prayer ere she retired to rest, the minds of old Dame Casterman and her sons were very differently occupied. There they sat in their disorderly kitchen; a small lamp, placed on the table round which they had gathered, threw a wavering light on their sinister countenances, while the rest of the room was enveloped in almost complete darkness. The three were holding a family council. How astonished and shocked would poor Catherine have been could she have overheard their conversation! for from it she would have learnt that her aunt was an accomplice of the Castermans. She transported the more valuable of their ill-gotten goods secretly to the shop of a Jew in the town, and helped them in various ways; in return for which they gave her a small share in their profits.

On the present occasion her name was frequently mentioned with reference to certain articles of considerable worth which they wished to be taken privately to the Jew's.

'Mind, the other men of the town must know nothing of it,' urged the dame; 'or else they will want a share in the profits, because, forsooth, they were at the wreck; though, as you all know, 'twas myself who found the jewels on the dead body by the shore in the morning after they had all gone.'

A loud knock at the door interrupted the conversation. Stephen cast a hasty glance round the room. He was too much accustomed to deal with men of wild unruly passions to think it a needless precaution, before introducing his nightly visitors, to remove from sight any object which might tempt their cupidity. He pointed, therefore, to a couple of rings and a bracelet which lay on the table. His meaning was quickly understood, and his old mother hastened to hide them.

Mark then opened the door to give admittance to four or five strong rough-looking men. After wishing good-evening to the inmates they drew the wooden stools round the table, and seated themselves.

'Master Casterman,' said one of them, 'you must let us have a taste of that last shipload of brandy we smuggled in.'

The old dame on hearing the demand rose, and produced a stone bottle which she placed on the table, providing each of the men with horn drinkingcups. The dangers and adventures which had accompanied the capture of the shipload were for some time the subject of conversation. Then one of the party started a new subject by saying:

'What are we to think about this Higgins and his crew? What is his purpose in coming here? What's a commissioner got to do with looking after the coasts?'

The subject was evidently one of interest to the wreckers. They leant over the table and looked towards Stephen Casterman, anxious to know what solution he, whom they regarded as their leader, would give to these questions. But his gloomy countenance offered no clue to his feelings; and as he remained silent, one of the men proceeded to explain what he believed to be the state of the case. The Sheriff of Cornwall, he told them, found it impossible to put a stop to smuggling and wrecking on the coast, so he had obtained leave to appoint commissioners for that purpose, and Mr. Higgins was one of them.

'He comes,' continued the speaker with increasing wrath, 'to ruin, if he can, our trade; to rob us of our lawful prizes; for

time out of mind the cargo of wrecked vessels has been ours.'

Casterman now broke silence, and said, in the fierce determined tone of one who fully intends what he threatens:

'It this Higgins, or any one else, dares to meddle with me or mine, a bullet will soon settle him.'

This sentiment was loudly applauded by the rest of the party, who were now growing very excited, and, as the hour was late, Dame Casterman quietly withdrew. The children had already crept away fearful of the stray blows which often fell to their lot when the noisy wreckers met at their father's house.

CHAPTER III.

A BRIGHT sunny morning succeeded the day of Catherine's arrival at Penzance. At an early hour all was astir in the little town, for it was marketday. The farmers' wives and daughters came riding in with all the varied produce of the country. The fish-women, wearing red cloaks and flat beaver-hats called 'Mount Bays,' hurried along, carrying their fish in 'cowels,' a kind of basket supported on the back and by a band passed round the forehead. The intending purchasers went from stall to stall, talking and bargaining, and laying in a store for the rest of the week. Among the latter class might be seen the rich ladies of the neighborhood, who were far from disdaining such homely duties, and who greatly enjoyed the early ride into town.

The sun, which had risen in all its glory over the sea, was peeping into the narrow streets, and made them look bright and cheerful; but it was in the open country that the beauty of the hour was fully visible. A soft sea-breeze blew over the moors, gathering in its passage the sweet scent of the heather and other wild flowers. From hedge and bush, from glen and forest, came the melodious song of the birds, rising like a morning hymn of thanksgiving to their Creator; but no church-bell chimed in to call the faithful to prayer, as in former days; no convent or monastery rung out the Angelus at early morn. It would seem that while all nature celebrated the praises of God, man had forgotten Him, to think only of material gain. No longer did the laborer halt before the wayside cross to beg a blessing on his toil.

It was already broad daylight when Catherine awoke. Perhaps she had been dreaming that she was once again seated by her mother in their little cottage at Exeter; but now she started up in her bed and gazed around with that astonishment which one feels on awaking in a strange place. But morning brought with it brighter prospects. Besides, although Catherine's mother had left her poor in worldly goods, she bestowed on her a rich legacy of virtues; for she had instilled into the mind of her child Faith, which would guide her, like a brilliant star, through the intricate paths of life; she had taught her to cherish Hope, which, when the horizon was obscured, when all around was dark and gloomy, would bid her raise her eyes to that heavenly city where the sorrows of this life shall end, and suffering virtue be crowned with glory; she had inspired her with Charity, that virtue with the twofold mission, which would inflame her heart with love towards her Creator, and teach her likewise to pour the balm of consolation on all the poor afflicted souls she might meet on her path. It was accompanied by and under the guidance of these three sister virtues that pious young girl had started on the pilgrimage of life.

Catherine perceived that it was long past the hour at which she usually rose. She therefore jumped out of bed, and having, on her knees, thanked God for his protection during the night, and begged His blessing on the day, she was not long in dressing.

She looked round her room. It was small and low. Where it sloped down to the little cross-barred window it would not admit of a person standing upright. The large rafters and beams which formed the roof looked old and dusty. The furniture was no more than a wooden stool and a deal table. When Catherine had completed her observations, she descended the step-ladder

into the kitchen; dirty and comfortless, like the up-stairs room, and in addition filled with smoke.

On the table were some pieces of bread, and several empty wooden bowls, indications that the family had breakfasted. A little girl was standing looking out of the open door. When she heard Catherine coming down, she turned round and stared at her with astonishment. Catherine wished her good-morning, and then said:

'Are you not my cousin? By what name am I to call you? My name is Catherine.'

'Mine is Ruth,' replied the child shyly.

Ruth Barnby was a pretty little girl of about nine or ten years old, very fair, with large blue eyes and a profusion of light hair. She wore, as was then usual, a home-spun woollen dress of a gray color, and a little corsage laced in front; but these from long use had become dirty and untidy.

'Mother is gone to market,' she said. 'She bade me tell you, you would find breakfast there;' and she pointed to the table.

Catherine sat down, and ate some bread and milk. Ruth meanwhile amused herself by playing with a thin shaggy dog.

'Have you any brothers or sisters?' inquired her cousin.

'One brother and one sister,' was the brief reply.

At that moment the brother and sister made themselves at once visible and audible, for they came running in, laughing and calling to each other; but seeing their cousin they looked astonished, and made a hasty retreat.

'I am going to get some dry firewood. Will you come?' said Ruth, when she saw Catherine had finished her breakfast.

The two accordingly proceeded to the sea-shore, where they commenced gathering pieces of wood which the tide had cast up. They were soon joined by Susan and Maw.

When they had collected a sufficient quantity, they returned to the cottage, which looked darker and dirtier than before; contrasting as it did, so strongly with the brightness of all without. The two youngest children were evidently of opinion that it was far better to be out in the summer sunshine and breezes, and therefore, as soon as they had laid down their packages of wood, they left Ruth and Catherine to light the fire. This done, and having made the beds, Ruth considered that the day's work was over; but her cousin proposed that they should put the cottage in order before the return of Dame Barnby. The little girl opened wide her large blue eyes and seemed bewildered at such an idea. When, however, she saw Catherine first actively sweeping, then at work cleaning the windows, to the great annoyance of certain old spiders who had resided there time out of mind, encouraged by the example, she began to lend her aid; and soon the kitchen looked cleaner and more comfortable than it had done for a long time.

The two children then seated themselves on the door-step. They had remained there in silence some minutes, when Ruth suddenly jumped up, exclaiming, 'There is Patience.'

Catherine was at first puzzled, but on seeing her run to meet a little hump-backed girl, she conjectured, and rightly, that this was the 'Patience' to whom the word applied.

Patience Casterman stopped when she saw a stranger on the door-step, and fixed her eyes on her with an inquiring look. Then addressing Ruth, she said:

'Grandame sent me to know if you could come to-morrow. She has a bundle for us to bring to your mother, it is too heavy for me alone. Can you come?'

'I suppose so, but mother is at market. Do stop and play awhile.'

But the other refused, and in a few minutes was on her road back to Ty-and-dour.

'I often go to where that little girl lives,' said Ruth to her cousin when they were again alone. 'Dame Casterman gives us such large bundles to bring here, and mother never shows us what is inside, but puts them down at the bottom of her fish-basket. The Castermans always go out on stormy nights, and father used to go with them; and when the wind blew very strong, and we sat shivering by the fire, he would say it was a good night

to go to Ty-and-dour; but one night, two years ago, there was such a fearful storm, and father went out as usual, and he never came back again, for the next day we heard he had been drowned. Poor mother cried, but she did not look so miserable as when father used to beat her.'

'Beat her?' said Catherine with astonishment.

'O, yes; and I used to be so frightened when he was in his bad humors.'

From this conversation, and many things that Ruth related when speaking of her past life, Catherine understood that her aunt had been far from happy since the time of her marriage, and that probably the harshness of her manner was greatly owing to the trials and ill-treatment she had experienced.

Any further conversation at that moment was, however, interrupted by the arrival of Dame Barnby, who, placing down her empty fish-basket and addressing her niece, said:

'Well, you took a fine sleep this morning, to be sure. When I started there was not a sign of you. But,' exclaimed the good woman, as she entered the kitchen, 'you have not been idle since you have been up. Ah! well-a-day, it is a long while since the place has looked so clean and tidy.'

And the sight seemed to bring back to Dame Barnby some recollection of happier times.

'Ruth helped me,' said Catherine, 'and we tried to make it look nice by the time you returned from market.'

'Did Ruth indeed help you?' said the Dame half laughing, well knowing that her daughter was not much inclined to industry, and very much doubting the possibility of her being of much service.

For Ruth, though of a gentle affectionate nature, was in truth very indolent; her training had not been such as to form habits of order and industry. Less impetuous than Catherine, whose sweetness of temper was only the result of ardent prayer and constant efforts, she had neither her energy nor firmness of purpose.

Before the end of the first week spent at Penzance, Catherine found an opportunity, when the children were absent, to express to her aunt her desire to contribute something towards her own support, begging her acceptance of a small monthly sum for that purpose.

'Why, child,' replied Dame Barnby, 'I don't want to take away your money; but the truth is, I find it very hard to support myself and my children, and then, of course, another person coming makes matters worse. I should never have asked you for a penny; for, though I am poor, I have never begged from any one. Since, however, you are kind enough to offer it yourself, I tell you honestly that it would be of much service to me.'

The young girl felt happy that she could be of use to her aunt, and henceforth she paid regularly the sum agreed on.

The week passed by without any event worth recording. The following Sunday, Catherine was seated at the little window of the cottage, gazing carelessly at the waves as they came foaming up the beach, then rapidly receding; her thoughts wandering far away to the distant scenes of her childhood. She recalled to mind the Sundays of the past; first, though only a vague recollection, sitting with her brother at their mother's feet, listening with wondering admiration to the history of some saint, and then, later on, that solemn Sunday when, for the first time she accompanied her mother to one of those Masses said in secret, and offered up by a priest destined perhaps, ere long, to make the sacrifice of his life in the holy cause of religion.

She was aroused from these thoughts by a remark from her aunt: 'I'm going to Gulval church, Kate; you can come, if you like; and Ruth will mind the cottage and look after the children.'

'I would rather stay here with them,' replied Catherine.

Her aunt did not object, and soon after started for church, the children continuing to play near the cottage.

For some time Catherine amused herself with them. Then she entered the cottage, and having taken from her trunk a well-used but handsome old prayer-book, a gift to her mother from her rich foster-sister, she again stole out unobserved. She paused

for a moment, and then directed her course rapidly towards Gulval Cairn. The site that *now* bears this name is but a confined spot, covered with stones, ferns, and gorse in the midst of cultivated fields, and in fact but a remnant of the extensive moors which, at the time of which we write, stretched almost to the sea. The young girl wandered across the Cairn, stopping at length at a spot where some large pieces of rock surrounded by tall ferns offered a sheltered and secluded retreat, such as she was seeking for. Before retiring into this nook she stood for a moment contemplating the view beneath her. The rugged moors sloped somewhat abruptly towards the sea, which lay calmly cradled in the bay, circling with its arms the Mount, as a sleeping child might some favorite plaything. On the left rose, from among a clump of trees, the quaint old tower of Gulval church, forming a picturesque object in the landscape. Catherine could distinguish her aunt's cottage and the children playing near it, and was glad to see that they had not followed her. She now knelt down behind the rock, her figure concealed by the ferns which reared their graceful forms on all sides. Opening her prayer-book, she read the devotions for Mass, uniting herself in spirit with those happier members of the Church who at that moment were assisting at the Holy Sacrifice. The pious child had just completed her devotions, when a sound, like a heavy sigh, uttered quite close to her, made her look round. She was not a little startled at seeing, standing behind her, an elderly woman. There was something very pleasing and benevolent in her countenance; and her eyes were filled with tears as she gazed with intense earnestness on the innocent girl. Catherine rose from her knees. The woman who had quickly noticed her look of surprise, at once addressed her.

'Sweet child,' she said, 'ye think it strange that I should be here watching you; but it did my heart good to see a Catholic child praying here among the ferns, in a place where least I thought to find the like.' The stranger spoke with the accent of one from the south of Ireland, and it sounded sweet to Catherine, for it reminded her of her own mother's voice. 'I know you are a Catholic,' added the woman 'for here is a rosary, which must be yours; it's a handsome one too. I found it on the moss sparkling in the sun. It was lying near the heath-clump, just there. Ah, sure I said, some Catholic has been by here; and then my heart beat for joy on seeing you.'

As she finished speaking she held out to Catherine the rosary, which had been her constant companion since she was quite a little child.

'Thank you, good friend, whoever you are,' said Catherine, 'for the sympathy you show a poor child whom you have never before seen. I need not ask you what is your religion, for you must be a Catholic; but I should like to know your name and where you live.'

'My name? It is Bridget O'Reilly. I keep a shop in the town; perhaps you have noticed the sign-board with Widow O'Reilly on it. Many is the long year I have spent here since I came over the sea from my own dear Ireland.'

'From Ireland!' exclaimed Catherine. O, that was dear mother's country; I love the Irish. She has often told me about them.'

'God's blessing be upon you! She was Irish! Ah! and it is she who taught ye the true faith. Is it here she lives?' asked Widow O'Reilly. Catherine could not answer, but the tears fell quickly down her cheeks, which her kind friend perceiving, said softly:

'Lana-ma-chrena! (i. e. child of my heart), ye have lost her, perhaps? But weep not so. The angels have taken her soul, and the heavens are her bed. Let us sit down upon this rock, and I will just tell ye something that will please ye to hear.'

So saying they both seated themselves, and the good woman continued:

'There are some Catholics here, and we often have the holy Mass. For there is a Catholic gentleman nigh here who many a time harbors a priest, God bless him! and sends for all the people round to come to the chapel. Other times I get the

neighbors to come to me, and we say our prayers together. Whenever ye like to come, ye are welcome.'

'Thank you,' said Catherine; 'I shall be glad to have some one of my own religion to talk to and pray with.'

'Where at all is it that ye live? for I ne'er saw ye before.'

'I only came last week. I live now with my aunt, Dame Barnby.'

'I know her well. My house is not very far from her's, for mine is the last *in* the town, and her's is the first *out* of it.'

Catherine heard Ruth calling her; so, bidding good-morning to her aged friend, she ran towards the cottage.

'Where have you been?' inquired her cousin.

Catherine told her of her new acquaintance, although she did not repeat the conversation they had had.

'Widow O'Reilly is very good,' said Ruth; 'every one knows her and loves her; when any person in the village are ill, she will go and see them, and she helps those that are poor. I remember I was ill once, and she came and sat by my bedside and made me drinks from goodly herbs.'

The two cousins now entered the cottage.

CHAPTER IV.

It was midsummer's eve. The fiery sun of June was on its decline, a refreshing breeze blew from the ocean, the waves rippled lazily over the yellow sands; St. Michael's Mount, on the western side, was bathed in a flood of light, the broken outline of its ivy-clad sides standing sharply defined against the unclouded sky of that beautiful evening.

The shadows lengthened as the sun gradually sunk on the horizon, and at length was lost, leaving only a faint reflection of its glory in the golden clouds. Then the scene became enveloped in the soft and pleasant glimmer of twilight; this again yielding in turn to the more dark shades of night, till the outline of rocks, hills, and trees grew more and more indistinct.

Suddenly, and as if by magic, the whole town and neighborhood became illuminated. From the Mount, from Marazion, from Newlyn and Mousehole shone forth fires, whose reflection in the still ocean enhanced the splendor of the vision. In a few minutes the whole bay glowed with a girdle of flame.

The inhabitants hurried through the streets, some bearing torches, some singing quaint old ballads, others laughing and talking. The children especially seemed overjoyed, and joining hands they commenced the game of thread-the-needle, running through the streets vociferating, 'An eye, an eye!'

Catherine had come with her cousins to see the festivities which at Penzance always celebrated the summer solstice.

While the latter joined in the sports, the young girl, whom a more serious disposition and recent sorrows rendered less inclined to take part in those riotous games, stood watching with a quiet enjoyment the novel and striking scene; the beautiful effect of the bright blazing fires, and the strange appearance of the groups as they moved about amidst the glare of the torches. At length the children by their noisy mirth attracted her attention. Suddenly, the joyous band would stop, the two last in the string elevating their clasped hands and forming a large eye, through which all the rest must pass. As she stood watching them, she happened to look across the street, and noticed a man standing half concealed in a small archway, who seemed desirous of avoiding observation, for he leant close up against the wall. His guise was that of a traveler. A person with a torch just then passing threw a strong light on his features; and no sooner had they become visible than Catherine recognized with astonishment the priest who had attended her dying mother, and had so often visited in disguise the city of Exeter. Yes, it was Father Ralph. She could not mistake those features, on which a long life of virtue and suffering had imprinted a majesty, while they still retained the energy of youth. This zealous priest had been educated and received Holy Orders in

France, but he had afterwards returned to England to carry consolation to his Catholic countrymen, and endeavor to win back those who had strayed from the true faith. For nearly thirty years he had been engaged in such labors, and had encountered numerous difficulties and dangers; yet, with the help of God, he had succeeded in eluding the vigilance of his enemies, although a reward had been offered for his capture, and the magistrates were ever on the alert to discover priests.

The last of the merry party had passed on, and Catherine, finding herself alone, advanced towards Father Ralph.

'O father! do you not remember me?' she said; 'I am Catherine Tresize, whose mother you attended when she was dying. After that, you know, I came here. I am so happy to see you.'

'Indeed, I have not forgotten you, my child. Often have I thought of you since we parted at Exeter. You are, I believe, with Protestant relations. There, are perhaps, no Catholics near you, and it is a dangerous position for one so young; but keep firm to your faith, and thus you may become the instrument of their conversion. I have received a letter from a friend,' he went on to say, 'to a Catholic gentleman who resides in this neighborhood; but night has overtaken me, and I do not know the road to his house; perhaps you can tell me where Sir Reginald de Courcy lives. The name of the Manor-house is Bron-Welli.'

'I have been here so short a time,' replied Catherine, 'that I know very little of the country; and I have not heard of any one of that name.'

'Then, my child, I must seek shelter elsewhere for the night. But ere I bid you farewell, I must conjure you not to forget the good instructions which your poor mother gave you. She taught you your religion, I know; and if you now have difficulties, and have no friend to whom you can confide them, remember that there is One Who will never abandon you. Pray often, dear child.'

'O, indeed, I will do all you tell me. I hope the place you are going to is near; then I shall be able to hear Mass, and to have your good counsels to direct me.'

A slight noise made Catherine turn her head, and she was surprised to see Maw standing close behind her. He laughed when he noticed her astonishment.

'Maw,' she asked, 'how long have you been here?'

'All the while you've been talking,' replied her little cousin; 'I heard all that you said.'

Catherine drew aside the child who was still laughing with mischievous delight at the thought of having startled her.

'Maw,' she said gravely, 'you would not wish to have any one put to death, would you?'

'No,' said he; 'why do you ask me that?'

'Because you must then promise me not to repeat a word of what you just now heard. If you did, you might cause this gentleman to be put to death, and I should be put in prison. Maw, will you promise? I know, if you do, I can trust you.'

Catherine spoke so seriously that the child believed her words, and promised not to mention any part of the dialogue he had overheard. Just as Father Ralph was about to depart, Maw turned to his cousin. 'I know the road to Sir Reginald's,' he said.

'Well then, I pray thee, my lad, guide me thither,' said the priest.

'No, no; I should be afraid to come back all alone in the dark,' said the child, after a moment's reflection.

'You shall not come back alone,' remarked Catherine, 'for I will go with you. And if,' she added gaily, 'it be true, as people tell us, that light keeps off evil spirits, you have nothing to dread to-night; for, see, there is a bonfire on every hill. Come, Maw, do not be frightened.'

Maw, like many older than himself, was without fear where there really was danger. He would climb the steepest rocks; he would run carelessly along the narrow ledges, where one false step would have precipitated him into the foaming abyss beneath; he would, for the sake of a bird's nest, risk his life on the

slender branch of the highest tree: but the idea of going out in the dark quite terrified him. All the stories he had heard of giants, fairies, and the various spirits supposed to haunt the moors and woods of Cornwall (and in those days such belief was common), now came before his mind; and it was only with much pressing that his cousin could persuade him to guide Father Ralph to his destination.

The three started; Maw leading the way. Across the moors they went, their path lit up by the bright beams of the moon. As the distance between them and the village increased, the voices of the children, the shouting and singing, all died away, and the stillness of a summer's night reigned around.

They had proceeded some way along a winding path, which on leaving the moor ran through a wood, when they reached the embattled walls which bounded the more immediate precincts of the extensive domain of Sir Reginald. Fronting them stood an ancient archway, partly clothed with ivy; its heavy doors thickly studded with nails, and well strengthened by large iron bars. Through this entrance they now passed into an avenue. The lofty trees, in full summer foliage, met over their heads, and in spite of the brightness of the moon they were almost in darkness; a white line, worn in the grass by the feet of men and horses,—for nothing else ever passed, carriages and carts being then alike unknown at Penzance,—was the only indication of road they must follow.

As they walked on through the park occasionally a deer, startled by the sound of footsteps, would rush across the path, then disappear in the nearest thicket. The avenue ran straight for about a quarter of a mile before reaching the manor-house. It was a quaint and venerable-looking old structure, part of it dating from a very early period, the tower from the days of the first Norman kings. Other buildings had been subsequently added, and it now formed a large and somewhat straggling edifice, with a courtyard in the centre. Thus there was alike the charm of antiquity and a picturesque irregularity, totally different from the straight formal mansions of modern times.

Beneath the fairy touch of moonlight the scene was peculiarly enchanting. There was a mysterious gloom where the dark shadows fell from projecting buttresses or from the more advanced parts of the building; while to parts more in view, the soft rays gave additional beauty, the top of the tower, especially, shining as though roofed with silver; here a mullion or a cornice standing out in bold relief, there the diamond panes of the long narrow windows receiving a brilliant lustre. The large white owl that issued with doleful hooting from the thick ivy-mantled part of the edifice, seemed, as its snowy wings glistened for an instant in the moonlight ere it vanished again in the shade, like a forlorn spirit doomed to haunt at night the place of its former abode. Maw regarded the bird with superstitious dread, and shrank close to his cousin, as in its uncertain flight it passed near him.

On reaching the house Father Ralph, having thanked his young guides, knocked at the massive door. After some delay the face of an old man appeared at a little grating. 'Who is it that comes at this late hour?' he asked.

'One who desires to speak to Sir Reginald de Courcy.'

At the name of his master the aged porter opened the door and admitted the traveler; while the two children, seeing the priest safe inside, hurriedly retraced their steps homeward.

'Kate,' said Maw to his cousin, after they had walked some way in silence, 'do tell me who that gentleman is, and how you came to know him.'

'I will tell you, but only on condition that you do not repeat it.' Maw gave his promise, and Catherine continued: 'that good gentleman is a priest. He goes about among the Catholics, consoling them, and encouraging them to keep to the true faith; and this at the risk of his life, for should he be discovered he would be put to death. I have known him a long time. When dear mother was alive, and we lived near Exeter, he used often to come to the house of a Catholic in the town. We used to go to Mass there, and he would give me beautiful instructions. Those were very happy days.'

'Then are you, Katé, what they call a Papist?' inquired the boy. 'They are bad people. I heard the blacksmith, who is a very clever man, say so.'

'I have the happiness of being a Catholic,' replied Catherine warmly. 'It is a holy religion, and it teaches us to be good. Those who speak against it do not understand it.'

'I don't know what you mean,' said Maw. 'What does it teach you? and what is the good of it?'

'It teaches us first, to know God, to love Him, and serve Him in this world; and if we do this, we shall be happy with Him for ever in the next.'

'To know God, to love Him, and serve Him!' repeated Maw, thoughtfully. 'I have heard that there is a God. But I don't know anything about Him, so I cannot love Him; and I am sure I could not serve Him, for I never see Him. Who is God? and why should I love Him?'

'Poor Maw!' said Catherine compassionately; 'did no one ever speak to you of the great God who created all things? has no one ever taught you to pray? Well, then, listen to me, and I will tell you. God is a pure Spirit, that is to say, He has no body; we cannot see Him while we are in this world, but He sees us at every moment, and knows even our most secret thoughts. He is all-powerful, all-just, all-merciful.'

The two children had, at this moment, reached the border of the moors. Catherine laid her hand on her companion's shoulder, and asked him to stop for a moment.

'Look, Maw,' she said, pointing to the glorious heavens; 'look at the beautiful stars; see, how fair the moon is; then, down below, look at the ocean, how mighty and wonderful it is. On the other side of us are the trees, with the soft breeze rustling through their leaves. Even the grass we tread under foot, and the yellow clumps of gorse which cover the moor, are full of beauty. Well, Maw, it was God who created all these things for our use and happiness. Just now you asked me why we should love Him. Do you not see how much He has done for us? And God has done far more, and greater things for us, as I shall tell you another time.'

'O, Kate,' exclaimed the boy, 'I never knew all that before.'

The two then proceeded on their road in silence.

We usually hear the great truths of religion at so tender an age that they sink gently into our hearts without producing in us any vivid impression; we learn the existence of God, and our love for Him awakens in our young souls before the mind can fully comprehend the object of its affections. And thus are happily implanted in us the seeds of religion, which gradually expand as our reason develops. But this had not been the case with Maw. He had reached the age of nine without having received any religious instruction: so that now, when for the first time, he heard of the Great Being who created the universe, and learnt that it was his duty to love Him, and that God was ever present, and witnessed all his actions, he was filled with wonder and awe. The stars, the ocean, the trees and plants, were not new sights to him; yet they seemed to wear a different aspect since Catherine had pointed them out as the works of God, and specially made for the use and happiness of man.

It is true the uncultivated intellect of the child could not form a just idea as to what a pure spirit was; nor could he understand how God could be present without his seeing Him. The boy, therefore, purposed to question his cousin concerning all this another time; but in the meanwhile he believed, with the simple and earnest faith of childhood, what one older and evidently better instructed than himself had told him.

They soon regained the village, where the festivities had not yet terminated. Dame Barnby had been so busy gossiping with her friends and acquaintances, that she had taken little notice of the absence of Catherine and Maw.

Ere Catherine fell asleep that night she thought over the occurrences of that evening; her fortunate meeting with Father Ralph, the prospect she now had of being able, sometimes at least, to attend to her religious duties; and, again, her conversation with little Maw, awakening the joyful hope that she might,

as the good priest had told her, be the means of converting her aunt and cousins.

With the natural impetuosity of her disposition, the ardent girl longed for the morrow, that she might begin their instruction. She could see no obstacles; all seemed easy to her zeal. Age and experience teach us to moderate the ardor of even good desires; but who can flatter themselves, at the age of fourteen, with the idea that they have attained perfection? Certainly Catherine did not; more mature reflection would doubtless have convinced her that the task she was about to undertake was one more arduous than she had at first supposed; though she would not have abandoned it on that account, even if her hopes had been less sanguine. Still, it is certain that too great a zeal for good is far preferable to a total want of it; the former, age may soften, the latter nothing can remedy.

On the following day the festivities assumed a different character; idling, with music on the water, called by the inhabitants 'having a pen'orth of sea,' succeeded to the rejoicings of the previous evening. An old fisherman took the children of Dame Barnby out in his boat; Catherine, unaccustomed to the sea, preferred to stay at home.

So she sat near the cottage gazing on the lively scene, as the boats plied to and fro, while she listened to the strains of music, which, although the only instrument used was the bagpipe, did not sound harsh when borne across the waters, and heard in open air; the fresh voices of the children chiming in with the murmurs of the waves, and having altogether a wild and pleasing effect.

As she watched the gay scene, she nevertheless felt sad, for she could not free herself from a feeling of disappointment, because her plans had been disturbed; and she had not, as she had counted, been able to speak to Maw. But now there was no chance that day, and the next would be market-day, and she would be wanted to go with her aunt and help to carry the fish. As she mused on these things it suddenly occurred to her that, while forming plans for the conversion of her relatives, she had forgotten the most important part, namely, to ask God's assistance, without which all her endeavors would be fruitless. Catherine now saw her fault, and raised her heart for a few minutes in humble and fervent prayer.

She then tripped gaily into the cottage and found that her aunt had gone to Ty-an-dour, leaving to her special care the pot which was boiling on the fire, and which was indeed a thing deserving attention, as it contained the family supper. Having seen that all was right, she again went out, this time proceeding along a little path that skirted the moors, and not stopping till she stood before a miserable-looking cabin, which rose to view near a dark pool of water—a forlorn-looking place, the dwelling of an aged and infirm woman, who subsisted chiefly on the little supplies brought to her by charitable persons. Widow O'Reilly often sent her provisions, frequently employing Catherine to take them, well knowing the pleasure it afforded the kind-hearted girl. The instructions of her mother, often repeated, never to turn away her face from the poor, or to speak a harsh word to them, had sunk deeply into her heart; and in earlier days even, when with others she was occasionally quick-tempered, towards the poor her manner was always soft and kind, recognizing in them the suffering members of Jesus Christ.

As Catherine passed the threshold of the cottage, an expression of joy appeared on the countenance of its bed-ridden inhabitant. Affectionately did the youthful visitor inquire after her health, and tender were the words she addressed to her. Nor did she leave until all around had been made as comfortable and as clean as circumstances would permit; and what perhaps pleased and touched the old woman more than anything was a large nosegay of wild flowers placed by her side; that so, if deprived of the enjoyment of nature during that sweet season of summer, she might at least see some of its beauties. No wonder that Catherine felt happy as she returned to her own occupations in her aunt's cottage, for she had given gladness to a sorrowful heart.

CHAPTER V.

SOME days after St John's eve, Bridget O'Reilly received word from Lady Margaret de Courcy that there would be Mass at the Manor-house on the following Sunday, and that she and the other Catholics in the town were invited to attend. This message was quickly spread among the little congregation.

The good widow kept one of the largest and most respectable shops in Penzance, and had by her upright dealing, her charity to her neighbors, and her exemplary life, gained the esteem and affection of all the townsfolk. She never went to their church, it is true, nor mentioned the subject of religion; but this they either attributed to a total indifference concerning it, or, if they suspected her adherence to the ancient faith, the time was not so far removed when all England had been Catholic that they should entertain any great dislike to so excellent a woman on that account.

Penzance had, indeed, suffered less from religious persecution than most other parts of the country. The hatred of the government was directed with far greater bitterness against the missionary priests who had been educated abroad than against those ordained before the Reformation; and many of the latter were suffered to exercise their functions unmolested, especially in Cornwall; but as these became extinct, which was the case towards the middle of the reign of Queen Elizabeth, the people in that part of England were left without any spiritual teachers; and thus, about the time of our story, the inhabitants of Penzance were extremely ignorant, and for the most part indifferent about religion; for though they had fallen away from the Catholic faith, they had not yet embraced Protestant opinions. There were a few persons, indeed, of whom the smith, John Tregarthen, was the head, who were possessed with a fanatical zeal, and of this, declamations against Catholics were a chief sign.

After having been thus left to itself for many years, Penzance was at length supplied with a Protestant minister and a commissioner, who both took up their abode in the town a few weeks before Catherine's arrival.

The minister of the gospel-occupied himself very little about his flock, spending most of his time in hawking and other field-sports.

His friend, the commissioner, had been sent to Penzance with the view of putting down the smuggling and wrecking that prevailed on the coast in that direction.

But this he found less easy than he had expected; for he soon saw that he was surrounded by an uncivilized and lawless set of men, who had long engaged in their odious trade with impunity, and who would doubtless have scrupled very little to put an end to his life, had he interfered with them.

He was far removed from military aid, and had with him only a small body of attendants on whom he could rely.

He decided, therefore, though with some reluctance, that it would be more prudent not to meddle with their concerns till he should have established his influence more thoroughly over the inhabitants, who might, in time, be induced to act with him against the wreckers. But Mr. Higgins was not a man to acquire influence; he was one of those dry harsh natures who are served and obeyed through fear, but never conciliate the affections of any one; and he was not therefore likely to succeed with people who felt that he had not power to enforce his commands.

His pride was deeply wounded on finding that his authority was set at defiance. To compensate himself for this humiliation, and to throw some glory on his stay in Penzance, he determined to institute a rigorous search after priests. Having heard that a Catholic gentleman resided at the Manor-house, he gave orders to his attendants to be constantly on the watch to detect if missionary priests were ever harbored there.

From the peace which Sir Reginald and his family had hitherto enjoyed, they had little apprehension of danger. On Sunday, therefore, as had been arranged, while the commissioner was attending service in the parish church of Madron, a considerable

number, including the family and servants, and many tenants and laborers on the estate, with a few townspeople, among whom of course were Bridget and Catherine, assembled in the beautiful chapel of the Manor and heard Mass.

The adorable Sacrifice had been offered, most of the worshippers had left, Bridget and her young friend still remained in prayer before the altar, when a waiting woman came, and told Catherine that her ladyship desired to speak to her. She accordingly followed the maid to what was called the 'Ladies' Bower.'

In an old-fashioned arm-chair at the further end of the apartment sat the lady, dressed in that peculiar style with which the portraits of that period have made us familiar. There was in her manner a great dignity, but no haughtiness; so that while she inspired respect, she also won the affection of all who approached her. Catherine felt rather shy on first entering, but Lady Margaret's kind words gave her courage.

'My child,' said the lady, 'Father Ralph has spoken to me concerning you. He says that for many years he has known you; that you have been well brought up, and fully instructed in our holy religion; but that those with whom you now reside have fallen away from the true faith. Full well do I know, dear child, how sad a thing it is that at so tender an age, you should have none to counsel you in difficulties, or console and comfort you in trouble. Widow O'Reilly told me that Dame Barnby was your aunt, and that with her you live, who, though she is doubtless a worthy woman, can give you no spiritual assistance; nay, perhaps she would rather hinder you in that respect. Wherefore, seeing to how many and great dangers you are exposed, I feel much interest in you, and I desire that you should come here occasionally to assist at the prayers, and receive religious instruction. Your mother doubtless taught you to use your needle; if so, I can give you plenty of employment; and my waiting-woman shall teach you any skillful work of which you are ignorant. And thus, dear child, will you find friends here, and assistance in the way of salvation.'

Catherine, who had listened with joy to these propositions, now expressed her warmest gratitude to lady Margaret, who, charmed with the respectful bearing and sweet simplicity of the young girl, was astonished to find in one of her station of life so much refinement of manner.

Catherine then returned home with Bridget, to whom she imparted the glad tidings. The good woman was already acquainted with Lady Margaret's intentions, and had been commissioned by her to ask Dame Barnby's consent. Catherine was glad of this, as she did not know whether her aunt would be pleased or not with these arrangements.

When they reached the cottage, Bridget entered, Catherine going down to the beach with her cousins. Eager were the inquiries of the children as to what she had done at the Manor-house, and whether she had seen the priest.

Catherine's answers were prudent; for she feared that by an over-hasty confidence in her little friends she might bring trouble on the De Courcys, and therefore she avoided saying anything concerning Mass, or how many or who the persons were who had assisted at it; she satisfied Maw by telling him that she had seen Father Ralph, and that, moreover, the good priest had inquired after him; which greatly pleased the boy.

'O,' said Maw, 'that makes me think I wish you would tell Ruth and me about God, as you did that evening when we led the gentleman to the manor. I tried to repeat it to her, but I could not make her understand, for I did not know it well myself.'

Catherine willingly assented; and the children having seated themselves on the rocks, she explained to them the first part of the Catechism—that wonderful book, which contains such high mysteries, and is yet adapted to the understanding of a child. Her cousins listened with eager attention, and so rapidly did the time seem to pass that they were all quite astonished when Dame Barnby called them for the midday meal.

'Now, Kate,' she said to her niece when they came in, 'Widow O'Reilly has just been telling me that the Lady Margaret wants you to go up to the Manor-house yonder of an afternoon to work

with her waiting-women, and she will give you work to bring home if you are quick at it, and so you will gain a little money. It's very kind of her ladyship, and I am very willing you should go; but they are all Papists there, and perchance they might want to make you one, which would not have mattered much a year ago, to be sure, but now this commissioner has come, the less one has to do with Popery the better. So take care, Kate.'

Without waiting for an answer, Dame Barnby turned away, leaving Catherine very glad that she had not raised any objection to Lady Margaret's kind offers.

CHAPTER VI.

A BEAUTIFUL sight indeed is a truly Christian home, in which each member of the household, master and servant, parent and child, unite in serving God; where the heads of the family encourage and influence their dependents by their virtuous lives, and where a spirit of union and peace pervades the atmosphere. Surely on such a home the eye of the Almighty must rest with pleasure; and to the angels, who gaze with sad wonderment on the wickedness of man, it is doubtless a refreshing sight, like that of an oasis to the weary traveler in the sandy desert.

It was a family such as this that inhabited the ancient Manor-house to which Catherine and Maw had guided Father Ralph, and to which the former was henceforward to resort for religious instruction and aid.

The gentry of Cornwall at that period were not distinguished either by a love of literary pursuits or by refinement of manner; and if Sir Reginald de Courcy differed from them in these respects, it was principally owing to the superior education he had received from a priest of great learning and piety, who had been chaplain to his father. In the library were to be found many rare old books, illuminated manuscripts, quaint legends of the middle ages, and lives of holy men—works the perusal of which cheered the long winter evenings, and formed the delight of Sir Reginald and his family.

Master and servants would all gather round the spacious hall-chimney; Lady Margaret ever busily engaged with some needle-work; the children listening with fixed attention, while their father read aloud some portion of English history, or the feats of the valiant crusaders, or the relations of devout pilgrims who had visited renowned sanctuaries, or stories of the chivalrous knights of King Arthur. Sometimes one of the party would recount, for the amusement of the rest, one of the old Cornish tales, or 'drolls' as they were called, consisting of marvelous accounts of giants, fairies, and ghosts—stories in which the people greatly delighted.

In the more holy seasons, as in Lent or Advent, the lives of saints and other religious works would take the place of less serious books. There were times, as Sir Reginald looked towards his two sons who sat on the bench which he had occupied when a boy, that he thought with sorrow of the brother who had once sat there by his side, and of whom his own mischievous laughing Hubert forcibly reminded him. It was not that death had robbed him of the companion of his early years; no, a separation far more painful now existed between them, for Cuthbert de Courcy had abandoned the faith of his fathers.

Sir Reginald had vainly written to him, imploring him to consider the peril to which he exposed his soul, the loss of which none of the earthly honors he hoped to obtain by this change of religion could ever compensate. His remonstrances had been received at first with coldness, and then with anger. Years had since passed by, but the dispositions of Cuthbert were unchanged; and though his brother had lost sight of him, the memory of him never faded from his mind.

Lady Margaret was the light and soul of the house. Firm as well as gentle, she was well fitted to preside. Her day was divided between prayer, the duties of her household, which in those days occupied a large share of the attention of even ladies of rank, and the care of her children and of the poor.

To her the needy came for relief, the unhappy for consolation, the sick for remedies, and those in trouble for advice. In the midst of her numerous occupations she was ever to be seen cheerful and happy, promoting the comfort of all around her. Her husband found in her a devoted wife and prudent counsellor, who encouraged and supported him in all good works; and to her children she was an affectionate and watchful mother, not foolishly indulgent; for both she and Sir Reginald considered it as the first duty of Christian parents to bring up their children in the fear and love of God, and to make them useful members of the society.

Lady Margaret had received a solid education, which enabled her to instruct her children herself and to guide them in their various studies; she was also very skillful in all kinds of needle-work. But there was one especial art with which she was acquainted, which is little known to ladies of the present day. In a sunny spot behind the dwelling was a piece of ground watered by a running stream, and here it was that Lady Margaret cultivated wholesome herbs with the medicinal properties of which she was well acquainted. She collected and dried their leaves or flowers, and stored them away, carefully labelled, in a room devoted to that purpose. If any one in the house were ill, or if poor persons in the neighborhood were suffering from colds or fevers, she knew of some simple remedy among her herbs to cure them, or at least to alleviate their pain.

The days succeeded each other in peaceful rotation, bringing with them the same duties and occupations; and thus, removed from the hopes and fears, ambitious projects and contentions of the rest of the world, the inhabitants of Bron-Welli passed their lives in happy retirement. There were no newspapers to convey to the good people of Penzance the events of the day. Occasionally a wandering pedlar, or a benighted traveler, who sought hospitality at the Manor, recounted the tales he had heard of what had happened in the other places or the events he himself had witnessed; and thus news from the busy world without came to them like echoes from a distant land.

The year before Catherine's arrival at Penzance had been a sad one to the De Courcys; two of the children, the merry Hubert and a younger sister, had fallen victims to that very fatal, and then prevalent disease, small-pox. Only two children now remained; the eldest son Austin, who was about thirteen, and Barbara, a little girl scarcely two years of age.

One thing had been a source of deep regret to Sir Reginald and his pious wife, and this was the difficulty which Catholics experienced from not having priests to minister to their spiritual wants; one particularly felt by themselves at the death of their children when no priest was present to repeat the prayers for the dying, and to give the last blessing.

Father Ralph was therefore received into this devout household with great joy, especially as, unlike the other priests who had visited them and only remained a short time, *he* had directions from his superior to establish a mission in Cornwall, and had consented to make the Manor his head-quarters.

Such was the house and family to which Catherine now frequently resorted, and where she soon became a great favorite with Lady Margaret, her waiting-women, and especially little Barbara, on whom she frequently attended.

Those were pleasant afternoons for the young girl when she was able to go to Bron-Welli. Lady Margaret and her maids would assemble in a large room to work together, as was then the homely custom. The lady during that time gave them religious instruction, and allowed each one to question her freely; or she recounted some edifying tale, and to these Catherine listened with great pleasure, repeating, on her return home, to her little cousins what she had just learnt.

All were surprised to see how beautifully she could embroider; and as Lady Margaret paid her well for her work, Dame Barnby was the last person to be dissatisfied.

Two months had elapsed since Catherine's first interview with Lady Margaret, when one day she arrived at Bron-Welli hot and breathless.

'Why have you come with such great speed, my Kate?' inquired her kind benefactress.

'I have made haste to come and warn you; for on my way hither I met the commissioner, and with him persons from the town, coming to search the house for priests. I overheard them say so.'

Consternation was visible in the faces of the waiting-women, and they whispered their mutual fears as they stood expecting the orders of their mistress, who, despatching some in search of Father Ralph and Austin, herself went to Sir Reginald, taking with her Catherine to give all necessary details. Sir Reginald deemed it prudent to conceal the priest, fearing the commissioner might discover him to be such.

Not far from the chapel was a hiding-place, which was entered by taking up the floor near the fire-place. Father Ralph descended by this means into a small dark closet, and those without carefully closed up the entrance. The altar furniture was stowed away, and all ornaments taken from the chapel.

Scarcely had these arrangements been completed, when the commissioner and his party drew up in the court-yard, and having dismounted, entered, announcing to the dismayed servant who gave admittance to the unwelcome visitors, that they intended 'forthwith to search the house with much diligence for Popish priests and the like.'

They were met in the hall by Sir Reginald. 'Sir,' said the commissioner, in a solemn and pompous tone, 'I presume that you are Sir Reginald de Courcy, to whom belongeth this mansion.' The latter having assented he then continued: 'Having been appointed by the Sheriff of Cornwall to see that the laws of the realm are not violated with impunity in these remote parts, I intend by my zeal in performing my various duties, nay also by needful severity, if the same becometh necessary, to render myself worthy of the confidence of the high official whom I represent. Now it hath come to my hearing that a Popish priest hath entered this town unawares, and doth lie concealed in some place unknown to us; and moreover, seeing that you and your household refrain from attending the church, I thought you, sir, might be so rash as, despite the commands of our gracious lady the Queen, to give harbor to an enemy of the state; and therefore it is that I have come hither to search your house.'

Mr. Higgins considered that he had a great talent for speaking, and never lost an opportunity of displaying his oratorical powers. He now fixed his penetrating gaze on Sir Reginald, anxious to discover what effect his discourse had produced. But he was disappointed, as no fear was portrayed in the calm, almost stern, look that met his own; nor were there any signs of agitation in the manly voice that addressed him thus:

'Sir, in this house there is no such a one as you describe; no enemy of the state has ever found shelter beneath my roof. But if it please you to search the place, do so; you are welcome.'

'I do not require your permission to do that to which I have a right, and which it is my duty to do,' replied the commissioner sharply. 'Here, men,' he cried, to those who accompanied him, 'we must begin. But this gentleman must be locked up, or he may be gone ere we return from our search.'

'Be satisfied on *that* point,' replied Sir Reginald, who felt not a little indignant at the imputation of cowardice which the remark involved; 'you will find me here when your search is ended.'

'Very well,' replied the other, reluctantly; 'let us to work.'

The party then spread themselves through the house; but the commissioner soon perceived that it would be almost impossible to find any one without some clue to their hiding-place; for the Manor was a rambling building, with an endless number of passages, deep recesses, queer-shaped rooms, large granaries, and vaulted cellars. Vainly they felt along the tapestried walls to discover if any person were concealed behind; with no better results they measured the rooms with long poles, so that if any part were not accounted for, they might pierce into that portion of the wall.

At length the commissioner found his way to the chapel. A

Catholic place of worship it had certainly been, but there were no signs of its being now used as such; and as those who had raised the beautiful little Gothic structure were long since gone to their repose, Mr. Higgins could censure no one for its existence. Leaving the spot, he mounted a small spiral staircase, which led to the room where Father Ralph lay concealed.

'Geoffry,' said the commissioner to one of his men, 'do you see those bricks near the fire-place? They look to me as if they had been newly put down.'

'Certainly, sir, they have that appearance. Is it your pleasure that we should remove them?'

'Might there not be a place for a man to get down into the wall of the chimney below, by lifting up this hearth?' remarked another of the pursuivants several of whom had collected round the spot.

'It is only the rats, yer honor,' said a voice from behind; and the commissioner, on looking round, saw a tall, vigorous man standing at the top of the stairs.

'O, here is Larry O'Toole!' said one of the party, who recognized in the new-comer an Irish servant who had been many years at the Manor.

'I gave orders for all the serving-folks to be locked up; why have I not been obeyed?' demanded Mr. Higgins in an angry tone. Before his attendants had time to answer, Larry responded:

'Sure 'tis *out* of the house I was until I came in, and then one of yer own men told me what ye were looking for. It's not much they will find, says I. But when I saw ye searching where we took up the bricks to get at them rats, why, sure, I did not like to see a gentleman like your honor troubling himself about so small a matter. It's no concern of mine, of course; so I'll just say no more about it, if yer honor does not wish.'

The commissioner seemed puzzled; he looked sternly at Larry, who was now leaning against the chimney with well-feigned indifference, although in truth, he felt anything but indifferent as to the result of the search.

'You are a Papist, as your master is, I suppose?'

'Faix, yer honor, I am,' replied the servant.

'Then you are not to be relied on. Here, men, take up these bricks, and let us see what rats are under them,' exclaimed Mr. Higgins impatiently.

'I'll defend his reverence to my dying breath, if they do get him out,' thought Larry to himself, as he saw them removing the first brick. At that moment a wild shout of joy resounded through the corridor. All stopped to listen.

'They have found something,' said one of the pursuivants. 'Shall we go and see ere we try what seems a very unlikely place for a man to hide in?'

The commissioner, not wishing that any other than himself should have the honor of a discovery, agreed to this; and they all left the room to join the rest of the party, who had found a hollow place in the wall behind a large piece of tapestry, which they had partly torn down. Considerable time and trouble were expended in piercing the wall, when what evidently had been intended as a place of concealment was exposed to view. Lights were procured, the mysterious spot carefully examined, and, to the great disappointment of the searchers, nothing was found.

The day was now fast declining; the last rays of the sun had faded from the western side of the old Manor. Discouraged by their ill success, the pursuivants resolved to depart at once, not considering it necessary to make any further search in the room near the chapel.

The commissioner and his party passed through the hall where Sir Reginald was still seated. The sharp features of Mr. Higgins wore an expression of baffled spite; and although he said little, he appeared much mortified.

'I have found nothing *this* time,' were the only words he uttered; and without waiting for an answer he left the house.

Of the party of townspeople who, at the instigation of the ever-busy blacksmith, had volunteered to accompany him, some laughed at his failure, others grumbled at the useless trouble they had given themselves; one and all agreed that they would

not again put such ready faith in mere reports; and none were more convinced of the folly of doing so than the commissioner himself.

'Geo'fry,' he said turning abruptly to the unfortunate attendant who had brought him the tidings, 'where heardest thou about the priest?'

Master, 'twas as I told you: that two men said that a person whom they had seen told them he had traveled here with a man who looked much like a Popish priest.

'Then if you wish to remain in my service,' retorted Mr. Higgins, 'take heed that you never bring the like uncertain reports again to disquiet me.'

CHAPTER VII.

The last days of October had been chilly; the first of November dawned cheerless and foggy, and as the day wore on, its aspect did not improve. At four o'clock that afternoon the narrow streets of Penzance were dark and dismal, and for some reason there was not the usual stir or business. An individual, well wrapt up in a ponderous cloak, was the only person to be seen; he walked with hurried step, appearing absorbed in thought. The road was one with which he was evidently well acquainted, for he mechanically turned up and down, from street to street, scarcely ever raising his eyes from the ground until he entered the main thoroughfare, and then he did look up, and stopped short: for the din of voices struck his ear, contrasting strangely with the previous silence. Stephen Casterman, for he it was, gazed with some surprise on the motley group that had collected at the blacksmith's door, and completely obstructed the pathway. The old hump-backed cobbler was there, with a boot in process of mending; the carpenter, with his rule peeping out of his pocket; and sturdy little lads, the sons of fishermen, were standing with their hands behind their backs, staring up in bewilderment at the smith, a tall man of gigantic strength, and a person of great importance in the town.

Thomas Tregarthen, besides being well acquainted with his trade, knew a little of everything, and was a great talker on all subjects. On the present occasion he seemed to be haranguing the people. Casterman determined to ascertain what the matter was, and pushed his way through the crowd.

'O, Master Casterman,' exclaimed the little cobbler, 'here you are!'

'Well,' returned Stephen, 'what is Thomas Tregarthen talking to you all about to-day?'

'He was just giving us his ideas on religion. You know awhile ago the constable searched Sir Reginald's house for a Papist priest, whom folks said was there: methought it was a grievous thing to molest so good a gentleman. However, the constable has offered a reward to any one who shall find the hiding-place of the said priest; so the carpenter has been on the look-out.

'Well, what has he found?' interrupted Casterman, who was growing impatient.

'In truth, he found nothing, but he *thought* he had, and came to Master Tregarthen's to talk it over in a neighborly way, as we always do; I and a couple of others were in the forge at the time; and the passers stopping to see what the matter was, there gathered the crowd you see, and Master Tregarthen got very warm about religion: he is a marvelously good speaker. I could listen to him the live-long day.

'Well,' said Casterman, 'as I have no time to lose in talking or in hearing others talk, I'll wish you all good-afternoon;' and with these words he left his gossiping companion, while the blacksmith continued preaching in a loud tone against the horrors and dangers of Popery.

Stephen hurried on his road. At length he stopped before a wretched house in a dirty narrow lane which ran from the harbor towards the old market place. The nets which hung on the sides of the dwellings, the strong smell of fish which pervaded

the atmosphere, and the hardy-looking men in blue home-spun jackets who sauntered about the doors, showed that the quarter was one principally inhabited by fishermen and their families. To many of the former Casterman was known as a daring wrecker and smuggler.

'Too much mist at sea to-day for a boat to venture out? What think you, Casterman?' said one of the men. Stephen answered by a kind of grunt, and gave a vigorous push to the door, whose old hinges creaked and shivered as it flew open.

The room into which the wrecker entered was small and miserable, and so dark that the numerous objects that filled it were scarcely distinguishable. Its sole occupant was an old man, whose long white beard and straggling locks gave him a somewhat wild appearance, his hooked nose and piercing black eyes betokening a Jewish origin: the expression of his face was far from agreeable, there being a look of cunning and deceit impressed upon it, which had increased with age. This individual was, when his visitor entered, seated in an old chair, his thin bony hands grasping a leather purse, of which he had been counting one by one the glittering contents: but the moment the door was pushed open, money and purse had disappeared in the Jew's pocket.

'Good-afternoon to you Isaac,' said Casterman. 'The Dame Barnby's child and my own little girl brought you the bundle of clothes and other small things from the last wreck, did they not?'

'Yes,' replied the Jew; 'and a worthless lot they are. There, he added, dragging some old clothes from under his chair; 'who do you think would buy *that*? Why, half the braid is off the coat, and one of the sleeves is nearly torn to pieces. The fellow who wore it must have struggled violently, trying to get up the rocks near Ty-an-donr, may be.'

'Perhaps so; but that's no matter. What will you give for the whole lot?'

An animated discussion ensued between the wrecker and the Jew, and at length the articles were reluctantly paid for by the latter.

Casterman then produced with an air of triumph a beautiful diamond ring which he had brought in his pocket.

'What think you of that?' he inquired.

The old man took it eagerly in his hand, rubbed the precious stones, and murmured half to himself.

'Real diamonds, set in gold,—eight of them I do declare! But,' he added in a louder tone, 'what use is so costly an article to me: who in this poor town would purchase it? I can't give much for it, or I should lose by it.'

Why do you speak thus? replied Stephen angrily. 'You know well that all such things as are too costly to find a purchaser here, you sell to your nephew, who comes from London town.'

'True,' replied Isaac 'but he cometh only once in the year, the journey being long and much beset with dangers: now he was here not fully two months ago, so I must needs keep this ring over ten months.'

'Well,' said Casterman, 'you won't make me believe that the keep thereof costs anything.'

He put the ring in his pocket, and advanced towards the door; Isaac called him back.

'Come, don't let us quarrel, and don't be off in such a hurry, Casterman. I was just going to propose a plan for you to gain a right good sum of money, therefore ought you to be glad to give me this ring cheap. Of course you will likewise share with me half what you will gain by following my plan. Do you understand?'

'No,' said Casterman. 'Say what you mean at once, and don't keep me waiting here.'

'I will,' replied the Jew hesitatingly. 'I will; but you promise to give me half?'

'Half what?' demanded the wrecker impatiently.

'Why, half the money that I shall make you gain.'

'And why do you want my help? not surely for the pleasure of sharing some money with me,' said Casterman sarcastically.

'Ah, I wax old, and can't do all I want, so you must needs help me. You promised to let me have half?'

'Yes, yes; go on, and be quick.'

'Listen,' replied the Jew. 'I heard say that a Popish priest was in the town.'

'Is that all you have to tell me?' interrupted the other. 'I heard it long ago; it is no matter to me, and ought to be none to you, I am sure, who are but a Jew.'

'All Christians are the same to me; I hate them all,' said Isaac scornfully; 'but there is a reward offered to any one who can find out the priests and such as harbor them. A hundred pounds is the price.'

'I can't be looking for priests and the like; where should I find them? they keep themselves hidden up, for good reason too; they have a bad chance of their life when they are caught.'

'Hark ye,' said the Jew. 'I have not dwelt all my life in this miserable old house, that is falling about mine ears, like the building that one of my fore-fathers, Samson, pulled down on the heads of the Philistines; nay, I was rich and prosperous once, the partner of a wealthy merchant; but the tide of fortune went against me. My partner was a Christian of one sort, and then he changed his religion and became another sort of a Christian, a Catholic, or Papist as they be more commonly named; he worshiped in secret and used much caution; but he liked and trusted me, and many things did he let me see that he and his friends did. I then noticed that on their Sabbathday they try to have a priest; and if you were to watch, you would find that all these Papists have at some time of the year a priest in their houses. Now, Sir Reginald is one of them; watch him, and you are sure to discover that he harbors priests.'

'Very good; but how am I to watch? I never go near the Manor.'

'Ah,' said Isaac musingly, 'that is true; do you know any of the serving folk?'

'No; how should I?'

'Well, I will tell you what you must do; make friends with the servants of the Manor; in every house there is a traitor, believe me.'

'I'll try,' replied Casterman, who seemed puzzled as to how he was to attain the desired object. 'Good-afternoon Isaac.'

'You don't forget that you are to give me half the money?' cried the Jew anxiously.

'Yes, when I have it. I promise,' said the other with a sneer.

So saying the wrecker took his departure. Enveloped in his dark cloak, he hastily retraced his steps homeward. That evening, Stephen intimated to his brother what the Jew had told him; Mark concurred in old Isaac's opinion, that the surest way of knowing Sir Reginald's movements was to become acquainted with his servants.

Any one who has read the description of a Cornish gentleman's residence in former days will readily understand that Stephen Casterman found no difficulty in gaining admittance to the kitchen of the Manor. Sir Reginald lived on friendly terms with all his poorer neighbors, and the hungry or the tired laborer or fisherman, who passed the open door of the spacious room which served the double office of kitchen and servants' hall, was sure to find a welcome from those within, and a slice of cheese and home-baked bread if he needed it; and there too he might sit by the roaring fire of a winter's evening, chatting with the attendants. One afternoon, therefore, Stephen, after an unsuccessful day's fishing not far from the Manor, left his companions to row back in the boats, and directed his steps towards the house. The wrecker, as we have before remarked, was not a favorite in the neighborhood, being by nature silent and gloomy; and as his ancestors were Danes, who had come, as was usual in those days, on a smuggling expedition, and had subsequently settled in Cornwall, the people were wont to remark among themselves 'that it was easy to see that the Castermans had no true Cornish blood in them, for they never made a friend of any man.' When, therefore, Stephen entered the kitchen on the afternoon referred to—the idea of a friendly visit from such a morose in-

dividual never presenting itself to the minds of the inmates—their sudden appearance caused quite a sensation.

'Hey, Master Casterman, what's befallen you?' exclaimed one.

'Any of your comrades drowned?' asked another.

'Nothing of the sort,' he replied: 'but the fishing is bad, and I am weary, not having eaten a morsel since morn. They say Sir Reginald never grudges a bit to a hungry man, so, being nigh the house, I stepped in.'

'You are welcome,' said one of the servants, as he handed him a large piece of bread and cheese, which Casterman, who really was hungry, eagerly grasped. Between mouthfuls he looked inquiringly at the inmates of the kitchen, wondering how he could obtain from them the information he desired. His eye at length rested on a young man who was standing talking with a fellow-servant. To a casual observer, Andrew Harkwright would have appeared a thoughtless merry fellow; but any one gifted with a quick perception of character might have discerned an uneasiness in his look and restlessness in his manner which denoted that all within was not right.

These peculiarities would probably have escaped the notice of Casterman, had not the expression of alarm which suddenly appeared on the young man's face, when he found that the eyes of the wrecker were fixed upon him, been too marked not to arouse his attention.

'That man has done something he is afraid should be known,' thought Stephen; and in his mind he marked him as his prey. But although Casterman paid more than one visit to the Manor, he could not find an opportunity of speaking alone to Harkwright.

CHAPTER VIII.

CATHERINE had now grown used to her new home; there were numerous trials in it, but there was also much good to be done; and that to an energetic and zealous character was a source of happiness.

At first Dame Barnby felt no great liking for her niece; but when she saw how industrious she was and that, far from being a burden to the family, she gained money by her work, she became more favorable to her.

Still the cold and at times harsh manner of her aunt was peculiarly painful to the poor child, accustomed to a fond mother's love, and possessed of a warm and affectionate heart. Sometimes she was tempted to yield to discouragement; or, when Dame Barnby only evinced displeasures at what she had done for the good of her and the children, her naturally quick temper would for a moment rise. But Catherine's was not a weak or cowardly disposition, and if the road she trod was more arduous than hitherto, she did not on that account abandon the narrow path which leads to eternal life; and when nature whispered that her endeavours to make her aunt happy and contented, and to turn her thoughts to religion, would be all in vain, and that she herself never could find peace and joy in that cottage, where all was so different to the home of her childhood;—when thoughts such as these presented themselves, she would reject them as unworthy of a follower of the crucified Saviour; and so she advanced bravely on her road. Lady Margaret's good counsels were of great assistance to her; but of late her visits to the Manor-house had become less frequent, owing to the shortness of the winter afternoons. She had also found a kind friend in Bridget O'Reilly, to whom Maw would sometimes say reproachfully, 'You love Kate better than us, whom you have known so much longer.' But she would laugh, and answer that her heart was large enough to cherish them all; and so it was. but it must be owned the young orphan had a very large share of her affections.

The attachment between Catherine and her consins grew stronger each day. She had taught Ruth how to spin and sew; and as Lady Margaret generally gave her little protegee some

needlework to do for her at home, they would sit and work together, when Catherine would explain to Ruth and Susan the principal mysteries of religion, and repeat to them the good instructions she received at the Manor.

The monotony of every-day life in Dame Barnby's cottage was disturbed by an event which cast a gloom over the little family.

Catherine's aunt had gone one afternoon, towards the end of December, to Ty-an-dour, telling the children that she would return soon; but the hours passed by, supper-time came, and still there was no sign of Dame Barnby; they waited in vain, until the two youngest of the party growing sleepy, after eating their share of the repast, went to bed.

The darkness of a winter's night had now set in; and when Ruth and her cousin opened the door to ascertain if any one were coming, they felt that a cold wind was blowing.

'Mother would never cross the moors in the dark,' said Ruth; 'she must have stopped at Ty-an-dour. She did so once before, I remember; so we had better wait no longer, but go to bed.'

They both retired to rest. But early next morning all was astir in the cottage, and as Dame Barnby did not appear, it was agreed that Ruth and Maw should start in search of her; and if they did not meet her on the road, proceed to Ty-an-dour, and see what had happened.

Time seemed to pass slowly indeed to Catherine, who anxiously awaited their return. At last little Susan, who had run out to look if they were coming, rushed back into the cottage, crying:

'Two men carrying mother; come and see, Kate!'

There, indeed, was poor Dame Barnby lying on a kind of stretcher, borne along by the two Castermans; Ruth and her brother following, weeping.

When she approached nearer, Catherine saw that her aunt was insensible.

'O, Ruth,' she exclaimed, 'what has happened?'

'Mother's arm is broken,' sobbed the child; 'when we first found her we thought she was dead.'

The poor woman was laid on her bed; Bridget came in to nurse her; and Maw was despatched for a bone-setter of great repute in the neighborhood.

When Ruth was a little composed, she related to her cousin all that had occurred. On her reaching Ty-an-dour with her brother, Dame Casterman told them that their mother had left the house late on the previous night; she then called to her sons, and asked them to go with the children, and look if the poor woman had fallen over the rocks near the sea, which they did; and after some search discovered her lying at the foot of the cliffs. They at first fancied she was dead; but on lifting her up a faint moan reassured them that life was not extinct.

Besides having her arm broken, Dame Barnby had received severe internal injuries; and in spite of the care bestowed on her by Catherine and Ruth, and the kindness of Lady Margaret in visiting her, and sending provisions and remedies to her, she seemed each day to grow worse.

Nothing could equal the devotedness of Catherine to her sick relative; she was also assisted by Widow O'Reilly, who being more experienced, knew what was best to do for the relief of the sufferer.

One evening Bridget came into the cottage, and said she would sit down with Dame Barnby, while the children might go and take a walk.

'Ah, Bridget,' said the sick woman, 'I fear much that I am dying.'

'Dying is it, my own poor Winifred? O, surely no, it cannot be; and yet you do look very ill,' she said, as she gazed on her pale face.

'Yes,' replied Winifred, 'I know I am very bad, and nothing can save me.'

'God can,' said Widow O'Reilly softly.

'God? O, I never thought of God during life, and He will not remember me in death. It is fearful to think of dying; not indeed that life has been easy for me; but then there are one's poor children to leave, and all that one knows and loves in this world;

and worst of all is the thought of *another world*, of which one forgets the very existence when one is well and strong.'

'May the God of heaven forgive me, that I never spoke to you before, said Bridget, as she wiped the tears from her eyes. 'I loved ye dearly, my Winny; but I had not the heart to speak to you of religion, for I thought you would never listen to me; now you will, won't you?'

'Say anything you like,' murmured the sick woman. 'You have been a good friend to me, and did not abandon me after my foolish marriage, like the rest did. But,' she added sorrowfully, 'you can do me no more good now; I must needs bid farewell to all.'

'Ah, weep not at the thought, Winny dear; it is home you are going to. Now, when I saw you were so ill, sure, said I to myself, that poor soul is going to leave its house and start on a long journey, longer much than to my own sweet Ireland, and if I do not tell her the right road to take to heaven, it will rest as a dark shadow on my heart to my dying day. So I have come to speak to you of the other world.'

'I heard there was a heaven and a hell, and grandame used to tell me when I was a girl, that if I was good, I would go to the one, and if bad, to the other, but that is no comfort to me, for what have I done to go to heaven?'

'And if you have never done a good action in all your days, it is not too late to repent, Winny. When our Blessed Lord was on earth, He told the people a beautiful story, which it always does my poor heart good to think on. He said there was a shepherd once who had a hundred sheep, and one of them strayed away and lost itself; well, what do you think the Good Shepherd did? why, sure, he left the ninety-nine others, and went in search of the lost one, and looked everywhere until he found it; and then he caressed it, and carried it home on his shoulders to the fold. Now, our Blessed Lord says that *He* is that Good Shepherd, and that is how He brings back the souls of poor sinners who have wandered away from Him. Now, if you will only turn to Him, and tell Him that you are sorry for having offended Him, why, sure, then He will send the holy angels down to bear your soul up to heaven; they rejoice, 'tis said, more over one sinner doing penance than over ninety-nine just.'

'All that is very beautiful,' said Dame Barnby; 'but how am I to turn to God? I would willingly do anything I could to escape hell.'

'We can obtain nothing, except through the merits of Jesus Christ, Who died on the Cross to save us all. Let us have recourse to Him, Winny. Will ye say these prayers with me?'

Bridget knelt down by the bedside of her poor friend, and with uplifted hands prayed fervently. When she arose there was an earnest expression in the deep-blue eyes of the old Irishwoman, as though she were about to say something of much importance.

'Winifred,' she at length said, 'I am a Catholic and have been one all the days of my life, glory be to God! I cannot let you die, my poor friend, without telling you that *that* is the true religion. I could bring a holy priest to you, if you would see him; and he it is who would speak words to you which would gladden your heart. What can a poor woman like myself, who am no better than another, do for you? But to the priest God has given power to forgive the sins of such as confess to him. O, Winny, if you would tell him yours, he would, in the name of the great God, promise you pardon for them all; you would die in peace; and the angels would make your bed in the heavens. Think of it, Winny dear.'

'I will,' murmured the woman faintly.

'Here are the children,' said Widow O'Reilly; 'so I shall wish you good-evening, and go; my little Kate will take good care of you, and Ruth will too. God bless them both.'

Catherine and her cousin made every thing as comfortable as they could round the sick woman; the former now slept in her aunt's room, that she might be near to administer to her wants during the night.

The following morning Dame Barnby related to her niece and daughter what Bridget had told her the previous evening, and asked them if they knew that their old friend was a Papist.

'In truth, I did,' replied Catherine smiling, 'and moreover I am a Catholic myself.'

The aunt was too weak to say much, so she bade the young girl not speak to her about religion; adding that *she* was a Protestant, and would die in that creed.

Although Dame Barnby spoke thus, she felt far from easy as to the future. She was not really attached to any faith; but now that her last hour seemed to be approaching, she found that religion was the only thing that could give her consolation. The old Irishwoman often came and sat by the bedside of her sick neighbor, and she and Catherine would talk to her of the world beyond the grave, of repentance for past sins, of the passion and death of our Saviour, and explain to her the Catholic doctrine. Several times they pressed her to see the priest; but to this she always gave a determined refusal.

Many wise dames, who knew Winifred Barnby, prophesied that she had not long to live. But she possessed a strong constitution, and after weeks of suffering there was a gradual improvement in her state; the fever subsided, she was able to rest at night, and towards the end of January, although still very weak, she could once more move about her cottage, or sit in the old wooden arm-chair by the fire, or, when the day was very fine, by the open window.

It was during her long and painful illness that Dame Barnby noticed and admired more than she had hitherto done the good qualities of her young niece. Besides being attentive to her sick relative, Catherine did the principal work in the cottage, and looked after her younger cousins. Her aunt was surprised to see one so young and joyous displaying a steadiness and devotedness rarely found even in those much older; and it occurred to her that this was perhaps owing to the religion of which Catherine spoke with such love and reverence.

Dame Barnby had approached the threshold of death, and at that fearful moment her immortal soul awoke as it were from a deep slumber; vague terrors seized the poor woman, and as it was only when Catherine knelt by her and prayed, or spoke to her of the mercies of God, of Jesus Christ having died to redeem the world, or of the intercession of His holy Mother on behalf of sinners, that she experienced some peace and for a short interval fear would yield to confidence in her Maker.

But she was now restored to health, and although the thought of serving God faithfully for the future did not quite abandon her, it must be owned that it grew much weaker. The fact was, that when Winifred lay on what she supposed would be her deathbed, only one thing seemed to her necessary, namely, to save her soul; but now that in all probability she had many years to live, worldly interests opposed her good intentions. The Catholic religion she believed to be the true one; but to embrace it exposed her to many dangers.

Another consideration acted powerfully on Dame Barnby's mind, and deterred her from doing what she well knew to be her duty. Her husband had belonged to that band of wreckers of which the Castermans had long been the leaders. After his death she still carried on business with them; she conveyed their ill-gotten goods to the Jews; she brought tidings to the inhabitants of Ty-an-dour of any ship she perceived laboring in a storm; or else she gave warning to the rest of the band that the Castermans would require their services on the coast near their own house; in return for which they allowed her a small share in their gain, and moreover promised to take Maw out with them as soon as he was ten years old. To abandon these connections would have been a loss to her; and yet, from the conversations she had had with Bridget and Catherine, she plainly saw that if she became a Catholic she must do so. It is true that she also gained money by more honorable means, by spinning, helping during harvest-time to bind the corn, and selling fish in the market; but in her straitened circumstances the loss of the Castermans' support and aid was a thing of no small consequence.

While Dame Barnby was thus hesitating between the interests of this world and those of the next: while Widow O'Reilly and Catherine redoubled their prayers for her conversion; Stephen Casterman was very differently, though not less completely, oc-

cupied with endeavoring to discover whether Sir Reginald harbored priests. Three months since his interview with the Jew had passed, and he had not obtained any information.

'I shall never succeed,' he said to his brother one morning, as they were both engaged in arranging their nets on the shore. 'I wish I could; fifty pounds would pay the debt to that old Jew.'

'Well, why don't you try what he told you; that, is to make friends with some of the servants?' replied Mark. 'They like to talk about their master's affairs. There is one tall fellow passes here pretty often, just ask him some questions next time.'

'Why, I've been in the kitchen of the Manor several times; but I could not ask them about priests and the like; I don't suppose they would tell me. I never said a word to the fellow you mean, though I have often seen him; however, I will try my best. But look now to the nets. Here, spread out this one;' and the brothers continued their work in silence.

Some days after, as Stephen was leaving the house, intending to proceed to town, he saw Larry coming from the Manor, and walking in the same direction, 'Good-afternoon to you,' said the wrecker, approaching him. The servant returned the salutation.

'You are one of Sir Reginald's attendants?' continued Stephen,

'Of course I am; and there is not a gentleman in all England or Ireland that I would sooner be serving than his honor.'

'What thought you all of the sheriff's visit? You were much frightened, I suppose?'

'Frightened! sure and what should we be frightened for?' replied Larry.

'Well, I know not,' said the other; 'but I suppose you had priests in the house?'

'Suppose we had, if ye likes.'

'But is it not true that your master *does* harbor them sometimes? The Jew told me that all Papists do.'

'Sure, man, what would you have a Jew know about the ways of Christian folk? But is it thinking of entering his honor's service ye are?'

'It' replied Casterman indignantly. 'I would not be a servant for the world.'

'Well, then don't be wearing the life out of me with yer questions, sure. I thought, of course, that it was seeing if the house would suit you, you were; but if that is not it, I will just wish you good-morning.' So saying Larry turned down a side street, for they had now reached the town and Casterman continued his road to the house of the Jew, reporting to him his ill-success.

All went on peacefully in the Manor-house and in Dame Barnby's cottage during the next three months; the inhabitants of the former were disturbed by no visits from the commissioner, nor by attempts on the part of Casterman to gain information from their servants. Father Ralph, who now passed as being preceptor to Austin, made frequent missionary journeys through Cornwall, and always returned in safety to Sir Reginald's.

One soft warm afternoon in May, Catherine entered the cottage with her apron full of wild flowers which she had gathered on her way from the Manor. Her aunt was alone in the kitchen, her spinning-wheel revolving rapidly as she drew out the long white tread from her distaff; she stopped working when her niece came in.

'How you love those wild flowers, child!' said the dame.

'Indeed I do,' replied Catherine smiling; 'they are so beautiful! O, what must heaven be, if the things of earth are so fair!'

'It is a happy thing to see the world that way, Kate,' said her aunt. Then after she had paused for a few minutes, as though reflecting on the young girl's exclamation, she continued: 'But there are many sorrows in *this* world that make one think little of its beauty: and as for the next, not many folks trouble themselves about it: and yet I ought,' she added in a more serious tone; 'for I have been brought back, as it were from death by

God's goodness; and it is in truth very ungrateful of me, now I am well, to forget all the good resolutions I made when I thought I was dying. I believe in the Catholic religion; but then there is the danger that people will find out I am a Catholic; and the commissioner has levied fines on all those above the age of sixteen who do not attend the Protestant church; now that would fall heavy on a poor woman like me.

Catherine spoke long and earnestly with her aunt: she unfolded, with the natural eloquence of one speaking from the heart of what it loves and feels, the immense bounties of God towards us, and the ingratitude of our not serving Him; then she pictured the misery of a soul in the next world that has not loved its Creator in this; and lastly she showed how short and trifling the pains and afflictions of this life are in comparison with the everlasting joy of heaven.

Words dictated by so ardent a love of God and zeal for the salvation of souls could not fail to make an impression on the mind of Dame Barnby: she promised Catherine that, if Lady Margaret would allow it, she would go to the Manor and speak to her ladyship and the priest; for there were many things about which she wished to take advice from some one older and more experienced than her niece.

It was with a light and happy heart that the young girl retired to rest that night; Ruth and Maw were also delighted to hear of their mother's intention; all three thanked God for His mercy towards them, and prayed that He would further the good work which was begun.

On the following feast of Pentecost, which fell that year in June, there was great rejoicing in the old Manor-house, and doubtless in heaven also there was joy among the angels, for that day the waters of baptism had regenerated four souls hitherto plunged in ignorance, but now become children of the Catholic Church.

The chapel on that day wore a festive air. The faithful crowded its narrow precincts in greater numbers than usual. All felt an intense interest in the converts; the brotherly charity that reigned among the congregation, the secrecy and caution with which the sacred rites were administered, reminded one of the first days of Christianity.

Before Mass began Dame Barnby and her three children advanced towards the altar. Father Ralph with the assistants said the 'Veni Creator' and some other prayers, and the converts having pronounced the profession of faith, received the sacrament of baptism.

Catherine had another cause for happiness besides the conversion of her aunt and cousins, although that was in itself sufficient to pour gladness into her heart; she had long been preparing to make her First Communion, and in a few minutes her wishes were to be fulfilled.

As she went to the altar the congregation noticed the expression of angelic peace on her features; they saw her devout and recollected manner as she returned to her place; but what passed in her young soul at that supreme moment none but Jesus and the little communicant knew. There are feelings too deep to find utterance in human words; and emotions which it would be vain to attempt to describe.

The happy party returned again in the afternoon to the Manor to assist at prayers. As they approached the house, Lady Margaret met and congratulated them, which, with true delicacy of feeling, she had refrained from doing in the morning, well knowing that souls impressed by the presence of their Creator, and still absorbed in heavenly and solemn thoughts, are ever desirous to be left in silence. What need have they of the words of creatures, when God Himself speaks to their hearts?

Some days later Winifred Barnby had an interview with Dame Casterman, in which she announced that she could no longer perform any of her accustomed services for them. She then, with the hope of changing the heart of the old woman, ventured to remark that the way in which her sons gained their livelihood was far from justifiable; that they were, in truth, answerable for all deaths in vessels of which they caused the wreck; but she only drew on herself such a torrent of abuse, that she retired,

though resolving to pray for the conversion of those of whom she had formerly been the accomplice.

Another year passed over; one of peace and happiness to Dame Barnby and her family. By her own industry, and that of Catherine and Ruth, they were enabled to live with more comfort than they had hitherto done.

Winifred entertained great fears that her son, when he grew up, would renew friendship with the Castermans, and become a wrecker like his father, if he remained at Penzance. She confided her anxiety to lady Margaret, and some time after, Sir Reginald arranged with the captain of a Waterford ship, with whom he was acquainted, to take the lad into his service. The captain was a Catholic, and as he was frequently the means of conveying priests to Ireland, he was desirous that all his crew should be Catholics likewise, for the treachery of one might ruin all, and he therefore willingly consented to take Maw, who started on his new career, half sorrowful at leaving his mother and sisters, the friends and scenes of his childhood, yet rejoicing at the prospect before him of a life on the sea full of adventure and danger. Beneath all, there was a lingering hope that some fortunate event would bring back the ship to Penzance before long; but that was not its usual destination, and he feared that many a year would elapse ere his mother once more clasped him in her arms.

Long did the inmates of Dame Barnby's cottage stand on the beach watching the vessel as it glided from the shore; and from their sad hearts rose a fervent prayer for the safety of the sailor-boy. Often during that day of Maw's departure their eyes wandered towards that dark speck on the ocean, each time more distant, which carried on it one so dear to them.

CHAPTER IX.

For two years Father Ralph had exercised his religious functions with comparative security to himself and those with whom he lived, though from time to time disturbed by sudden visits from the commissioner, which, however, to his great disappointment, always proved fruitless.

Stephen Casterman was no less discouraged than the commissioner, for, with all his efforts, he altogether failed in discovering whether priests were harbored at the Manor.

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'Very glad to see you, Master Casterman,' said the latter.

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'Pause a bit, friend; it may be of use to you; all Papists in that house.'

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The servant, too, had recognized Casterman. For a moment he hesitated and stammered, and then ended by avowing his religion.

'Tell me, now,' continued Casterman; 'does not your master harbor priests?'

'I cannot say; indeed, I cannot speak about that.'

'You must,' said Stephen firmly, as he placed himself against the door.

Harkwright for a time remained silent, a violent war seeming to rage within his breast. 'Shall I betray my master?' at length

he exclaimed 'It must be,' he added in an undertone; and then, turning to Casterman, he went on in a trembling voice:

'Naught can I tell you now, nor in this place; I am too much afraid. But meet me to-night, at ten o'clock, on the moors, near the dead oak: you know the spot?'

Very well,' replied Casterman. 'To-morrow I will be security for you, if you tell me all I want to-night.'

Harkwright left the house.

'Ah!' said Isaac with great satisfaction, 'we have been two years working for nothing; but now we have the secret.'

'I have worked two years, but truly I know not what you have done, save sit quietly at home,' replied his gloomy companion.

'Never mind, Master Casterman; you will reap the fruits thereof.'

After some bargaining over their goods the two parted. Anxiously did Casterman await the appointed hour, when he was to meet his new acquaintance on the moors—those same moors before pictured in bright sunshine, but now dreary and desolate; such they would appear on a stormy November night. It was about ten o'clock when, amidst the darkness, a figure might have been noticed advancing slowly and cautiously across the plain, towards a spot where an ancient oak, that had long since ceased to put forth leaves, stretched its blanched arms to the heavens, seeming in the surrounding gloom like some gaunt spectre, guardian of the moors.

Certainly it was not pleasure that at such a time, had brought that lone individual to a place like this; nor, as was apparent from his manner, had any good purpose called him out; for there is in one who is doing a duty, however disagreeable it may be, a certain steadiness of bearing, and a firmness of step, which were wanting in him of whom we speak. At times he crept rather than walked along; then again he would hurry forward, as if desirous of flying from his own thoughts; more than once he looked anxiously behind him, as if he feared that he was pursued; several times he stopped altogether, and gazed around. At last he reached the old oak. The moon, piercing through the broken clouds, now lent her light to the scene; and the timid visitor drew back with terror, as the form of a tall man, who had been leaning against the ivy which mantled the trunk of the tree, so that he seemed to form part of it, now stood erect before him.

'What is the matter? What is it thou fearest?' said the figure, whom Harkwright now recognized as the man whom he had promised to meet.

'I did not think you were there,' he murmured.

'I have been waiting this last quarter of an hour. But let us begin,' said Casterman. 'What is your name, and what information can you give me?'

'My name is Andrew Harkwright,' was the reply. 'But,' and he spoke with hesitation, and with some tremor in his voice, 'are you a priest-hunter?'

'Heed not what I am. At the Jew's to-day you promised to tell me all that I wished to know. Now answer: does your master harbor priests?'

'He is a Catholic, and he has a priest in his house. If you will wait about a month, you may be able to have them both arrested.'

The unhappy man had finished speaking, and had crouched back, shuddering against the thick ivy, as a sudden gust shrieked ominously through the branches of the old tree. Casterman, accustomed to the uproar of the elements, scarcely noticed the wild sounds; his mind was wholly occupied in trying to discover what Harkwright's real object was; and it occurred to the wrecker, that it might be only a clever device on the part of his new acquaintance, who, under the pretence of betraying Sir Reginald, was seeking information in order to frustrate the plans for his ruin.

'It is strange indeed,' he said, after a long pause, 'that a man should give up his friends so willingly; doubtless some strong reason pushed you thereunto. How comes it, that one in so goodly a position as you are should want to borrow money from a Jew,

and should be in such urgent need that you will even betray your master to obtain it? I must know all. Speak?'

'I cannot,' cried the wretched Andrew. 'But don't murder me! I will do anything you like!' And he tried to release himself from the iron grasp of Stephen.

Casterman quickly perceived that he had to deal with one of those cowardly natures that will do anything through fear. He said therefore:

'You are entirely in my power; you must do whatsoever I command. Tell me therefore your story; until I know all concerning you, you shall not leave this spot.'

Harkwright dared no longer to resist, and in a trembling voice he thus began:

'I have been twelve years in Sir Reginald's family—ever since my father's death; I was then ten years old. My father was a Catholic, and on this deathbed he feared that I, his only child, would be brought up a Protestant by his relations, who were all of that religion. My master promised him that he would take me as a servant into his own house, and see that I was properly instructed in my faith; and he said that, unless by my bad conduct I forced him to part with me, I should always have a home in his house; and he has kept his promise well—a good kind master has he been to me.'

'And is that your reason for betraying him?' inquired Casterman scornfully. 'But never mind, go on.'

Andrew could not continue. The remark of his acquaintance struck him with remorse. Was this, indeed, the return he ought to make to his master for all his bounties? Scenes of the past rose before his mind, and the howling of the wind seemed to his troubled imagination like the voice of his departed father reproaching him. He fell back against the tree and covered his face with his hands. 'O, that I had never come here!' he exclaimed; 'that I had not betrayed my poor master! What will become of me! What strange sounds do I here! this is a fearful place!'

Casterman stood looking at the false coward with a mingled expression of astonishment, pity, and contempt. He thoroughly despised the weak timorous character of his victim.

'Come, he said, 'I wish you would go on with what you were saying.'

'Well, the truth is, I am in sore distress. A year ago, some cousins of mine came to dwell in Penzance. We became great friends, we spent much money, and they persuaded me to lend them various sums. At length, finding that I had no more money of my own, I took some of my master's. My cousins then induced me to take more; and the end of it is, I have robbed to so large an amount that Sir Reginald cannot fail to discover it soon. One day, after the commissioner had searched the Manor, my cousins said that the best thing that could happen for me would be that my master should be taken for harboring priests, because then no one would ever know anything about the money, and they hinted that I might also get a great many valuables out of the house during the confusion which would naturally follow his arrest. I thought I might borrow from the Jew money enough to replace what had been taken. Then it was that I met you. I suppose you are a priest-hunter. It was thus I came to the resolution of betraying my master, that I might so save myself; and I have done it.'

'A few minutes' silence ensued, when Andrew with a sudden start inquired:

'Will my master be put to death for harboring a priest?'

'I know not,' replied Casterman coldly. 'But have you anything more to tell me? How am I to make sure of the priest being there when the commissioner comes? If you have no more to say I shall go home, for it is late.'

'O, do not go yet! I wish I had not spoken to you, and that I had not betrayed my master. What shall I do? If I told Sir Reginald, perhaps he might forgive me.'

'Hark ye to my words,' said Casterman sternly. 'If I had lived under your master's roof, and had eaten his bread for twelve years, I will say frankly that I would not then have turned upon him like a viper. But you have acted otherwise,

God's goodness; and it is in truth very ungrateful of me, now I am well, to forget all the good resolutions I made when I thought I was dying. I believe in the Catholic religion; but then there is the danger that people will find out I am a Catholic; and the commissioner has levied fines on all those above the age of sixteen who do not attend the Protestant church; now that would fall heavy on a poor woman like me.'

Catherine spoke long and earnestly with her aunt she unfolded, with the natural eloquence of one speaking from the heart of what it loves and feels, the immense bounties of God towards us, and the ingratitude of our not serving Him; then she pictured the misery of a soul in the next world that has not loved its Creator in this; and lastly she showed how short and trifling the pains and afflictions of this life are in comparison with the everlasting joy of heaven.

Words dictated by so ardent a love of God and zeal for the salvation of souls could not fail to make an impression on the mind of Dame Barnby: she promised Catherine that if Lady Margaret would allow it, she would go to the Manor and speak to her ladyship and the priest; for there were many things about which she wished to take advice from some one older and more experienced than her niece.

It was with a light and happy heart that the young girl retired to rest that night; Ruth and Maw were also delighted to hear of their mother's intention; all three thanked God for His mercy towards them, and prayed that He would further the good work which was begun.

On the following feast of Pentecost, which fell that year in June, there was great rejoicing in the old Manor-house, and doubtless in heaven also there was joy among the angels, for that day the waters of baptism had regenerated four souls hitherto plunged in ignorance, but now become children of the Catholic Church.

The chapel on that day wore a festive air. The faithful crowded its narrow precincts in greater numbers than usual. All felt an intense interest in the converts; the brotherly charity that reigned among the congregation, the secrecy and caution with which the sacred rites were administered, reminded one of the first days of Christianity.

Before Mass began Dame Barnby and her three children advanced towards the altar. Father Ralph with the assistants said the 'Veni Creator' and some other prayers, and the converts having pronounced the profession of faith, received the sacrament of baptism.

Catherine had another cause for happiness besides the conversion of her aunt and cousins, although that was in itself sufficient to pour gladness into her heart; she had long been preparing to make her First Communion, and in a few minutes her wishes were to be fulfilled.

As she went to the altar the congregation noticed the expression of angelic peace on her features; they saw her devout and recollected manner as she returned to her place; but what passed in her young soul at that supreme moment none but Jesus and the little communicant knew. There are feelings too deep to find utterance in human words; and emotions which it would be vain to attempt to describe.

The happy party returned again in the afternoon to the Manor to assist at prayers. As they approached the house, Lady Margaret met and congratulated them, which, with true delicacy of feeling, she had refrained from doing in the morning, well knowing that souls impressed by the presence of their Creator, and still absorbed in heavenly and solemn thoughts, are ever desirous to be left in silence. What need have they of the words of creatures, when God Himself speaks to their hearts?

Some days later Winifred Barnby had an interview with Dame Casterman, in which she announced that she could no longer perform any of her accustomed services for them. She then, with the hope of changing the heart of the old woman, ventured to remark that the way in which her sons gained their livelihood was far from justifiable; that they were, in truth, answerable for all deaths in vessels of which they caused the wreck; but she only drew on herself such a torrent of abuse, that she retired,

though resolving to pray for the conversion of those of whom she had formerly been the accomplice.

Another year passed over; one of peace and happiness to Dame Barnby and her family. By her own industry, and that of Catherine and Ruth, they were enabled to live with more comfort than they had hitherto done.

Winifred entertained great fears that her son, when he grew up, would renew friendship with the Castermans, and become a wrecker like his father, if he remained at Penzance. She confided her anxiety to lady Margaret, and some time after, Sir Reginald arranged with the captain of a Waterford ship, with whom he was acquainted, to take the lad into his service. The captain was a Catholic, and as he was frequently the means of conveying priests to Ireland, he was desirous that all his crew should be Catholics likewise, for the treachery of one might ruin all, and he therefore willingly consented to take Maw, who started on his new career, half sorrowful at leaving his mother and sisters, the friends and scenes of his childhood, yet rejoicing at the prospect before him of a life on the sea full of adventure and danger. Beneath all, there was a lingering hope that some fortunate event would bring back the ship to Penzance before long; but that was not its usual destination, and he feared that many a year would elapse ere his mother once more clasped him in her arms.

Long did the inmates of Dame Barnby's cottage stand on the beach watching the vessel as it glided from the shore; and from their sad hearts rose a fervent prayer for the safety of the sailor-boy. Often during that day of Maw's departure their eyes wandered towards that dark speck on the ocean, each time more distant, which carried on it one so dear to them.

CHAPTER IX.

For two years Father Ralph had exercised his religious functions with comparative security to himself and those with whom he lived, though from time to time disturbed by sudden visits from the commissioner, which, however, to his great disappointment, always proved fruitless.

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A few minutes' silence ensued, when Andrew with a sudden start inquired:

'Will my master be put to death for harboring a priest?'

'I know not,' replied Casterman coldly. 'But have you anything more to tell me? How am I to make sure of the priest being there when the commissioner comes? If you have no more to say I shall go home, for it is late.'

'O, do not go yet! I wish I had not spoken to you, and that I had not betrayed my master. What shall I do? If I told Sir Reginald, perhaps he might forgive me.'

'Hark ye to my words,' said Casterman sternly. 'If I had lived under your master's roof, and had eaten his bread for twelve years, I will say frankly that I would not then have turned upon him like a viper. But you have acted otherwise,

and go on to the end you must; for woe be to you if you likewise turn traitor to me! You owned yourself a Papist and a robber. and if you do not keep *my* secrets, I will not keep yours; so that you would be lost and your master not saved. Do you understand?

'I understand all too well that I have done a wicked and a foolish act, and that there is no remedy for it. But do not, I beg of you, say a word of these matters, and I too will be silent.'

'You are safe as long as you keep your part of the bargain,' replied Stephen.

It was finally agreed between the two to wait for the execution of their plans until Christmas-eve, when there would be, Andrew said, a Mass in the middle of the night. Casterman was, on the previous day, to inform the commissioner; and a little after midnight to lead him and his men to a back-door of the Manor, where, on knocking three times, the traitor would give them admittance.

The men then parted; Casterman returning to Ty-andour, inwardly rejoicing at his good fortune in meeting with one who was so serviceable to him; Harkwright retracing his steps homewards, his conscience bitterly reproaching him, and haunted by the anguish, terror, and despair which accompany an evil deed.

CHAPTER X.

CHRISTMAS has ever been looked upon as a season of great rejoicing, especially in the days of Catholicity. It was a time when people wished not only to be happy themselves, but to make the poor and the afflicted so likewise; a time when, by that Mass offered in the silence of night, the Christian honored the ever-memorable hour when the Redeemer of the world was born.

Stephen Casterman cared very little for Christmas rejoicings. Very different thoughts occupied his mind. It was then he intended to disclose to the commissioner what he had learnt from Harkwright, and hoped to obtain the promised reward for his pains. And on *that* night the treacherous Harkwright was to admit him and the commissioner into the Manor-house.

Mr. Higgins spent Christmas-eve much as he spent every other day of the year; he had no family, no one for whom he cared, and none who cared for him, if we except old Peter, a servant who had been with him twenty years, and had grown gray in his service.

At four o'clock on that afternoon the commissioner might have been seen seated by the blazing fire in his little parlor, his eyes fixed on the capriciously curling flames, while his thoughts wandered back into the past; and now and then a faint smile would play on the thin compressed lips of the old man, as pleasant recollections crossed his mind. A loud knock at the hall-door disturbed his musings, and in a moment all the bright visions of bygone days had vanished—Mr. Higgins' features had resumed their usual stern expression. He listened eagerly to the sounds outside, wondering who it was that required his services, or what could be the matter. He heard Peter give admittance to some one, when ensued an animated conversation; at length the parlor door opened and the old servant appeared.

'Please, sir,' he said in a low voice, 'there is a man in the hall.'

'Well, what is he doing there?' replied Mr. Higgins sharply.

'He says he wants to speak to you, sir.'

'Is he one, think you, that comes to ask us for charity? If so, tell him I have naught to give him.'

'No, sir; 'tis business that brings him here.'

'Then let him come in.'

'To say the truth, I like not the man's look,' replied Peter. 'He's a tall powerful man; his trade, he said, was fishing; and those folk never have any good in them; and how could they, living in the sea, more like fish than Christians? Shall I bid him depart, sir?'

'Tell him to come in at once.'

Peter knew by the determined manner in which his master pronounced these words that opposition would be useless; he left the room therefore, mumbling to himself that 'if the master *would* be murdered, it was not *his* fault.' Having introduced the visitor, he remained himself, as if to arrange the fire, until told to leave the room, which he did; though a few minutes after he again put in his head under some pretext, but only to receive a more peremptory dismissal.

'Well, what is your business?' asked the commissioner, drawing himself up very straight in his chair, and addressing Stephen Casterman, who stood before him. 'Do you come here to bring a complaint against some one, and to claim the powerful aid of the law to vindicate your rights?'

'I come here,' replied Casterman, 'to claim the hundred pounds' reward offered by you to any one who should discover a priest and those that harbored him.'

'Have you, then, found one?'

'I know where there is one. Sir Reginald de Courcy has long had a priest in his house. A servant at the Manor let out the secret. And, farther, to-night you may seize them all, for there will be Mass (whatever that is), and they will be all together in one room, and the priest with them. If you will come with your men, this servant will let us in by a back-door.'

'It is all excellently well planned; I knew there was a priest in that house!' exclaimed the delighted commissioner. 'Come here to-night, my good man, and lead us into the Manor, and to-morrow the hundred pounds shall be yours.'

'Tis all right,' replied Stephen, and he retired.

Ignorant of the projects formed against them, and of the dangers by which they were threatened, the inmates of Bron-Welli were spending Christmas-eve in peace and happiness.

That day the poor of the neighborhood flocked to the spacious kitchen of the mansion, where plentiful provisions were distributed to them for themselves and their families. Nor would Lady Margaret trust this charitable office to the care of her servants alone; but radiant with holy joy, she herself superintended all, accompanied by little Barbara, for she liked her children even when so young to share in her good deeds.

As she moved about she had a kind word for each—a question about their children, or about their more particular needs; and such as she knew were Catholics she invited to stop at the house that they might be able to go to confession, and assist at the midnight Mass; for it was Sir Reginald's wish, she knew, that all such should lodge at the Manor till the following afternoon. Sir Reginald himself, with Austin, was engaged in similar benevolence, riding round to visit his tenants. And all alike were repaid for their kind actions by the glew of happiness that continually rises in the hearts of those who engage themselves in doing good.

Dame Barnby had been invited to attend the midnight Mass, but Ruth was ill, and she did not like to leave her. She therefore gave Catherine leave to go with Bridget O'Reilly, saying that she herself would go to the morning mass, when her niece would return to take care of the invalid.

Towards evening, accordingly, Mother Bridget and her young friend, well wrapped up in their cloaks, started off for the Manor. On their way they talked of that first Christmas night, when the shepherds heard the angels' voices, and hastened to adore the Infant King. On their arrival they found many of the congregation already assembled.

The chapel was tastefully adorned with evergreens. There was a door which opened into the grounds, but this was kept locked, and people coming to Mass entered through the house to avoid suspicion; but in case of a surprise they could make their escape by the outer door.

Sir Reginald was not without some fear of a nightly visit from the commissioner, and the more because two Catholics had reported that as they passed Mr. Higgins' dwelling they had observed an unusual stir; he had, in consequence, placed two men as sentinels, the one outside the before-mentioned door, the other in front of the house. Alas, he little thought the enemy most to be feared was within! A small arched entrance at the end of the

corridor, leading to the chapel, had thus been overlooked; it had a strong bolt, and Sir Reginald had no fear that any would approach on that side of the house, and no precaution had been taken and it was by this door that Harkwright had agreed to let in Casterman.

The unhappy Andrew took no part that day in the general rejoicings: his fellow servants wondered what had made him so dull and uneasy; he wandered about the house in a disconsolate manner, his sadness and terror increasing as night approached. He went to the fatal door and examined the bolt, to see if it would make much noise on opening; as he was returning he met Sir Reginald.

'Are all the casements firmly closed?' inquired his master.

'I think they are all fast, sir. Yes, I am sure they are,' answered Andrew in a voice so trembling and low that it attracted his master's notice, who on looking more attentively at him, then remarked his extreme paleness.

'Are you ill, Harkwright?' he asked.

'In truth, sir, I do not feel well,' replied the servant, glad of the excuse; 'and if you would permit me, I should like to go to my bed now; my head is so bad, that I do not think I could sit up during Mass.'

'You may go at once, Andrew; had you told me before, you might have gone sooner. I hope you will be all right to-morrow.'

Harkwright had not the courage to answer. He fled rapidly to his room at the top of the house, and threw himself on his bed, wishing the fatal hour was over, and yet dreading its approach.

It was midnight, and he heard the footsteps of the people going to the chapel; and then a death-like silence reigned through the mansion.

Taking his lantern, he cautiously descended the stairs. His heart beat violently as he reached the door, against which he leant himself; the minutes seemed to him as hours while he stood trembling with cold and fear, and listened to the mournful howling of the wind. At length he thought he heard footsteps outside: the next moment three gentle knocks warned him of the commissioner's arrival.

Harkwright, as has been seen, was anything but courageous, and the crime he was about to perpetrate would not certainly inspire him with heroic sentiments. Up to the present with trembling steps he had been advancing in the path of wickedness; but now that the decisive moment had come, he felt a strange calmness. It arose, in part, from despair, but also from the conviction that he *must* now complete his evil action; and besides, his conscience was silenced by present excitement and interest in the success of the plot. With a steady hand he drew back the bolt and opened the door, giving admittance to Stephen Casterman, the commissioner his officers, and several others.

'You men,' said Mr. Higgins in an undertone, 'remain here until you are called; the fewer people, the less noise. Now, show the way,' he added, turning to Andrew, who mechanically preceded them in the direction of the chapel. Their footsteps were scarcely audible, as the stone floor was thickly strewn with rushes.

On reaching the door Harkwright stopped, pointing towards it; Casterman pushed it gently open, and gazed in with silent awe and wonderment. It would be difficult to say what the wrecker expected to witness; but certainly he was not prepared for the sight he now beheld. At the farther end of the chapel was the altar, decorated with evergreens; four large lights burnt on it, shedding a soft glow on that part of the chapel. Mass was now nearly over. The congregation were on their knees praying fervently, and the priest in his vestments stood on the right-hand side of the altar. Casterman had never before been within any place of worship, and now, as he looked into this chapel, a strange and solemn feeling came over him; he knew not what it was that touched his rough and gloomy nature; he only knew that there was something beautiful in what he saw. But what has taken many words to describe lasted only for a moment. Quickly the scene of peace and devotion, which had struck even

Casterman, was succeeded by one of confusion and terror. A sweep of cold night air blew along the corridor from the open door; it passed into the chapel, like the breath of an evil spirit disturbing the serenity of the holy place; several heads turned to see whence it proceeded, and then they beheld Stephen standing at the entrance. A murmur was heard through the congregation, and all rose from their knees, the words of prayer still lingering on their lips, the book or the rosary clasped to their hearts. The wrecker threw the door wide open, calling to his companions to come on. But now the scene was plunged in darkness. Austin, hoping to afford the priest time to escape, had extinguished the lights on the altar.

The commissioner shouted to his men to advance; in the hurry Harkwright's lantern was upset. Some of those inside tried to force their way through the ranks of the party who were entering; others passed up towards the altar; the side door communicating with the grounds was quite forgotten, until Sir Reginald was heard to call out:

'All you who can, make for the entrance on the right!'

There was immediately a rush in that direction; but, as often happens in such moments, the door was so well fastened that none could open it; the commissioner and his party were, however, under the impression that their intended victims would escape.

'Set fire to the house!' cried a voice from the crowd.

At these words Lady Margaret, remembering her little daughter who was asleep up-stairs, exclaimed in accents of deep distress:

'O, my child, my Barbara, she will be burnt!' and the poor mother darted forward.

Catherine was by her side, and whispered to her, 'My lady fear not; I will run swiftly and fetch her.'

Probably in her anguish of mind the lady had not heeded the words of her young companion, for she continued to push on; but Catherine, more agile, had already glided past the men at the door. She groped along the passages, traversed the hall, and reached the foot of the staircase, where through a long narrow window the moon shed her tranquil light. She had proceeded up two or three steps when she heard a scream. It came from the direction of the chapel. She stopped and listened. There was a confused sound of voices. What could that shriek have been? thought she. Was the Manor already in flames? She trembled and scarcely dared to advance.

'I will save the little lady at any risk,' said the courageous girl to herself. 'O, my God, O Holy Mary, protect me!' she added as she ran rapidly up the flight of stone steps.

She soon reached Barbara's room; a bright wood fire blazed and crackled in the large chimney, and cast a ruddy light on the old-fashioned furniture and on the bed of the little sleeper. Catherine awoke her from her peaceful slumber, and the child looked round quite bewildered.

'Where is mother?' she asked.

'You shall go to her presently, Barbara dear,' replied Catherine, while she dressed her hurriedly; and taking her in her arms, she left the room.

She knew her way well about the house, and guided by the moonlight, which streamed in at every window, she descended a back staircase, which led on to an outer door, which once passed she felt her little protegee would be safe. With mingled feelings of hope and fear she proceeded to unbar it, experiencing a sensation of deep relief when she had crossed the threshold.

Catherine directed her course towards one of the numerous outhouses at the rear of the Manor. She had at first intended taking Barbara to her own home, but she soon understood that this would be impossible; the walk was too long for the poor little child, and she herself had not the strength to carry her that distance. She therefore seated herself on an old bench, and placing her cold and terrified companion on her knees, endeavored to console her. Taking off her own large cloak and wrapping it round the child, she rocked her in her arms till she had fallen asleep and then laid her gently on the ground.

Kneeling down, she then returned thanks to God for her es.

cape, and that of Lady Margaret's daughter, praying also for those of the family who were still in danger. Then she went a little way outside, to ascertain if the Manor-house was on fire; there was a light in one or two of the windows, but as she was glad to see, no sign of fire.

Returning to the child, she laid down by her side. Her rest was disturbed; she heard over again in her sleep that scream that had so alarmed her, and then again would suddenly awake, imagining that men were breaking in, or that the house was crumbling into ruins.

Thus passed the dark hours of the night, and Christmas morning dawned, pale and cheerless. Catherine arose, feeling stiff and cold; but Barbara, who was well covered, seemed sleeping comfortably as if in her own little bed. Without disturbing her, Catherine proceeded cautiously towards the mansion, with the view of learning, if she could, what had become of the congregation of the previous night. She looked through the archway into the courtyard, and as nothing was stirring there, she continued her round outside.

'Catherine!' said a voice near her.

She turned quickly, with a feeling half of joy, half of fear, but was quite reassured on seeing one of Lady Margaret's maids. She was so full of anxiety to know the fate of those whom she left in the chapel, and so glad to see one of them, that she could hardly speak.

'O Mistress Jane, what has happened?' were her only words.

'Her ladyship's dying, methinks,' replied the waiting-woman, who appeared much agitated. 'Heaven help us! We are in sore distress. Where is the Lady Barbara?'

Catherine conducted her to the outhouse; and the maid taking the little child, who was still asleep, in her arms, returned to the house, accompanied by Catherine. On their way thither the maid told her that Lady Margaret, having hastened out of the chapel to rescue her little daughter, had fallen while mounting a small flight of steps at the end of the corridor, and received a severe blow on her back, which had caused her to scream loudly; that lights being brought, she was found insensible, and in that state carried to her room; and that her first question on reviving had been about Barbara, who was missing.

It was in search of the child, or rather of Catherine, the maid had herself come out, in the full hope that they would be found together; for she knew that, on the cry of fire, Catherine had run off to Barbara's room with the intention of saving her.

By this time they had reached the hall-door.

'The men have possession of the place,' whispered the waiting-woman to her companion. 'They have been ransacking the house all night; we durst not stir from the room where her ladyship was; but they have all fallen asleep now; There,' she continued, pointing to a man, who was lying on a bench near the spacious chimney—'there is one of them.'

They proceeded softly up the stairs, fearing at every moment that the slumberers would awake, and prevent their entering the house; for the commissioner had given strict orders to allow no one to enter. They passed on, however, unmolested, and arrived at Lady Margaret's apartment. When the door was opened Catherine saw her kind patress lying on her bed: she was deadly pale, her face wore an expression of deep sorrow, and she appeared to be in great pain, but yet there was a look of heavenly resignation on her beautiful countenance.

Barbara was placed beside her mother, who drew her darling fondly towards her.

'Was she with thee, my Kate?' she said, turning to the faithful girl.

In few simple words Catherine related what she had done, when Lady Margaret took her hand in her own and pressed it gently. She felt too weak to speak, and the silent gratitude of the mother was as well understood as if she had spoken. Catherine's eyes filled with tears, for she feared that her kind friend, whom she truly loved and venerated, was near her end.

Widow O'Reilly and several waiting-women, were in the room, and were conversing in a low voice.

'If we could but procure something for her ladyship!' said one.

'Stay ye all here,' replied Bridget, 'and I will go to the town and seek provisions; and may be Kate will come to help me.'

'I will indeed,' answered Catherine; and the two accordingly started.

The sun had now risen; his gracious rays warmed the benumbed earth, and cheered the landscape; high on a leafless bush a robin poured forth its joyous lay; it was Christmas morning, and nature looked bright and festive; but there was sorrow in many a heart that day.

On the preceding night Sir Reginald, Austin, and Father Ralph had been conducted, for greater security, to the commissioner's house. Mr. Higgins had used much caution and secrecy in doing so, for he knew that the De Courcys were beloved by the people; he therefore feared that an attempt might be made to rescue the prisoners; he also had all the servants he could find in the Manor locked up until morning, lest they should spread the news of what had happened ere he had provided for the safe keeping of the priest and his harbinger.

When Catherine and Bridget entered the town, they found every one in a state of much excitement; some of those who had assisted at Mass had spread the strange tidings, which filled the townspeople with astonishment. Most agreed that a Catholic priest deserved to be arrested, but that Sir Reginald and his family were too charitable and good to be interfered with. Great indignation was expressed against the commissioner, who determined to convey his prisoners early the following morning to Launceston, and hand them over to the Sheriff of Cornwall. Harkwright was to accompany them, to bear witness against his master and Father Ralph.

Having procured the necessary provisions at her own dwelling, Widow O'Reilly went to Dame Barnby's cottage, where Catherine had stopped to speak with her aunt, and to ask permission to remain with Lady Margaret until evening.

'Yes, Kate,' replied the poor woman, wiping her eyes; 'tis but right that we should do all we can for her dear ladyship; she was kind and compassionate to all poor folks; to you, Kate, and to myself, she has been very good. Go and stay with her as long as she wills it; the little Lady Barbara is fond of you, so you may be of use.'

Catherine bade farewell to her aunt and cousins, and taking a basket on her arm, while Bridget carried another, they followed the road to the Manorhouse. They had not gone more than half way, when they met one of the waiting-women coming quickly towards them, who told them that her ladyship had expressed a strong wish to leave BronWelli. 'Because,' said the maid, 'she remembers what harsh treatment poor Mrs. Tregain received fifteen years ago, when her husband was cast into prison, where he still remains, and she herself was driven from the house at night, with her helpless children. So we gathered together what jewelry, plate, and other things we could, and carried Lady Margaret, as she directed, to the farmstead of John Trehern. They are kind people, and good Catholics too.'

They had now arrived at the farmhouse, which was prettily situated on a gently rising slope, with woods between it and the sea, and surrounded by meadows and tilled fields, two patriarchal oaks shading its doorway. It was better built than most houses of its class, having been erected on the foundation of one of those Saxon castles so frequently met with in Cornwall.

Here had resided, for upwards of two centuries the Treherns, an honest hard-working race, whose representative, John, the present possessor, was, like his forefathers, a good and upright man, and for whom Sir Reginald had always entertained a just esteem.

On Christmas morning he had heard, from one of those present at midnight Mass, what had occurred at the Manor. After having discussed the matter with his wife, he resolved to go to the town and learn what he could respecting the fate of his landlord. He had not been gone many minutes when he was seen running back to the house again.

'Dame! dame!' he cried to his astonished wife, 'prepare

quickly the best room; they are going to bring Lady Margaret here! Just think! to have her ladyship under our roof! Now make ye haste, while I run and tell the messenger from Bron-Welli that all will be ready for her.'

The good dame hurried off at once, and with the help of her eldest daughter arranged the best room.

When Catherine and Bridget arrived, the poor lady asked eagerly if they had heard any news of Sir Reginald and Austin, and her face saddened when they answered that they had not; but she soon uttered those words which were ever on her lips and deeply impressed on her heart, 'God's will be done!'

Lady Margaret dismissed all her maids except one, who remained to wait on her, for she knew that they had homes in the neighborhood, most of them being daughters of her husband's tenants.

A week had passed, during which Lady Margaret's health rapidly declined. Her spine had been seriously injured, and this, added to the anxiety of her mind, was fast bringing her to the grave. Numbers of persons, among whom was Dame Barnby, visited her, and expressed their sympathy for her misfortunes. Catherine and Widow O'Reilly were with her nearly all day; all hope of her recovery had vanished, but they wished to serve her to the last, and, if possible, to ease her sufferings.

New Year's-eve came, and as Lady Margaret saw the sun sinking behind the western hills, she felt that she would never again see it rise. Her mind was peaceful, and though she knew her end was approaching, it was without experiencing any sensation of terror. On the previous day, while Bridget and Catherine were seated by her bed, she had explained to them her last wishes with regard to little Barbara. She told them how much she desired that the child should be restored to her father or brother, if either of them escaped.

'I fear my poor husband has little chance, but Austin will surely be released; and I know he will be a loving protector to his little sister, and will take her to my relations in Yorkshire. So, when you have an opportunity, I pray you let Sir Reginald and my son know where Barbara is. But,' added the mother anxiously, 'it may be long ere they can send for her.'

'And if it is so, my lady,' replied Bridget, 'the child shall not want a home as long as I have a roof over my head; and Catherine too will care for her, I know.'

'Indeed, I will do all I can,' said the young girl eagerly.

'May God bless and reward you both!' said Lady Margaret. 'She has Protestant relations, but give her not to them, I pray you,' added the mother anxiously.

'We promise we will not,' answered Bridget and Catherine at the same moment.

From the time that Lady Margaret felt assured that her little daughter would not be abandoned, or brought up in a faith contrary to her own, she remained calm and recollected; her lips often moved as though in prayer. She spoke no more, but she evidently knew those around her, and she fervently kissed the crucifix which Catherine presented to her.

At eleven o'clock that night, all the household knelt by her death-bed, while Catherine read the Prayers for the Dying; and most of those present were in tears at the thought of losing her whom in life they had so loved and revered.

The dying lady suddenly raised her head slightly from the pillow; her whole face beamed with heavenly joy; she gazed forward as though she witnessed some vision from the other world.

'Into Thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit,' she said then her voice failed, and her head fell again on the pillow.

'Lord Jesus,' continued the assistants, 'receive her soul,' and ere they had finished the words the happy spirit had fled.

The rest of the night was passed in prayers for the deceased, mingled with tears and sobs.

Next morning Catherine took Barbara to her future home at Widow O'Reilly's, and sought in various ways to amuse her; but in the midst of her play the child would often stop and ask where her mother was.

After Lady Margaret had been laid in her last resting-place,

Bridget returned to the shop, from which she had been absent some days. As is often the case with energetic natures, she had, during the late troubles which befell the De Courcys, and throughout the lady's illness, displayed a calm presence of mind without yielding to the grief which she inwardly felt; but now that all was over, and she found herself once more in her own home, with the vivid recollection of all that had happened since Christmas-eve, she sat down in her old wooden chair and wept, fondly caressing the while Lady Margaret's little daughter.

CHAPTER XI.

THE scene of our story must now change to London. In an apartment in one of those large mansions that stood in what is now the Strand, Adelina, the wife of Cuthbert de Courcy, with whose brother the reader is already acquainted, was seated close by the fire one cold day in January.

The room was richly furnished; among other things was a round table supported by a single leg, a novelty then, only to be found in the houses of the wealthy; a small Turkey carpet covered it, an article too costly at that period to be spread as now on the floor. One of the large French looking-glasses which were just then beginning to supersede the polished steel mirrors hitherto used in England hung against the wall. The stiff-backed chairs ranged round the room were covered with crimson velvet; the splendor of the whole apartment bespeaking the wealth and worldly greatness of its owners.

Adelina, who was for the moment its sole occupant, was young and extremely pretty, but her face wanted that intelligence and expression which often makes even a plain countenance more pleasing. She seemed to be expecting some one, for her eyes frequently turned towards the door, and she listened attentively to every sound; at length she heard quick footsteps in the passage, and the next moment the heavy arras-hanging was raised and her husband entered.

Adelina, remarking that it was late, inquired what had delayed him so long, but Cuthbert was absorbed in other thoughts, and made no reply.

'No evil tidings, I hope, my lord?' she asked.

'No, no, 'tis of small consequence to me,' said Cuthbert, rather following his own train of thought than answering his wife's question.

Adelina's curiosity was excited. Something unusual had occurred she felt certain; she pressed her husband to tell her what it was; he related that he had that day heard of his brother Reginald's arrest, and that he was now imprisoned in the Tower.

'Is there aught which you can do to save him?' asked Adelina; 'for I have heard say that it is a grievous offence against the law thus to harbor priests—therefore I fear that he will fare ill.'

To this Cuthbert, who had no intention of trying to help his brother, only remarked hastily, that all efforts to save him would be fruitless, and that, moreover, it was Sir Reginald's own fault if he were now in difficulties, since he was fully aware of the dangers he incurred by remaining a Catholic.

Cuthbert then spoke of the object which he really had at heart, namely, the acquisition of his brother's large estate in Cornwall. Adelina expressed a dislike to property thus obtained; but with specious arguments he overcame her objections. It was far better, he declared, that the property should become his than fall into the hands of strangers, and then, if he had no children, he might leave it, after his death, to his nephew.

'Tis a fair spot; the old Manor-house is strong and spacious, surrounded by noble trees,' added Cuthbert, who was desirous of giving his wife a pleasing idea of what he intended to make their future residence.

It is far more difficult to deceive ourselves as to what is right and wrong than to deceive others. There is the secret tribunal of the conscience before which the guilty vainly plead innocence.

Cuthbert's words had dispelled his wife's scruples and convinced her that he was in the right, but they did not soothe his own troubled breast. Besides, *he* knew what Adelina did not know; *he* was well aware that the Catholic religion was the true one, and the courageous conduct of his brother seemed a reproach to his own cowardice. Fear, and the desire of obtaining the honors and riches from which his religion excluded him, had made him renounce the creed of his fathers; but in his heart he believed. He would have given anything to extinguish that spark of faith, to stifle the voice of conscience which cried out to him that he was an apostate. In vain did he protest that conviction alone had changed his belief; others might give credit to his assertions, *he* knew them to be false.

'When my brother's fair domains are mine,' he said to himself, 'there I will settle, and at last be happy.'

Poor man! An evil deed may bring riches and confer worldly honors, but it cannot bestow happiness.

The time of Sir Reginald's trial was drawing nigh. Cuthbert therefore addressed a letter to an influential friend at the court of Elizabeth expressing his loyal sentiments towards her Majesty, and his zeal for the extension of the reformed religion, concluding with the hope that his friend would obtain for him the estates in Cornwall to be forfeited by Sir Reginald de Courcy, who was in the Tower under a charge of high treason.

The person to whom he applied was a relative of Adelina, and had already frequently received petitions from her husband for various situations and favors; he therefore thought, on perusing the present letter, that he could not do a better thing than procure for his troublesome friend a comfortable residence at the Land's End, and thus free himself for ever from his importunities; so Cuthbert received the desired answer that his demand would be attended to.

Both brothers now awaited the trial, which would in all probability bring death to the one, and confer a title and estates on the other; yet Cuthbert was far from being the calmer or happier of the two; the thought constantly harassing him that, had he used the same energy in his brother's cause as he had to obtain his property, he might possibly have saved him. But ambition, when it has once taken possession of a person, stifles all better feelings; and so De Courcy chose rather to leave his Catholic brother to his fate than to run the risk, by an attempt to save him, of losing the estates on the obtaining of which he had set his heart.

It must not, however, be supposed that Sir Reginald was free from anxiety; besides his own danger, which was that which least troubled his mind, he knew that his friend Father Ralph had no chance of escape. Then he was uncertain as to Lady Margaret, whether she were living or dead; and if anything had happened to her, there was the thought of his little Barbara—what would become of her, or who would take care of her—and the dread that the commissioner might insist on keeping her and sending her to live with Protestants, so that she would lose her faith. Even the companionship of his son was a source of sorrow, for he grieved to see the boy in captivity, although Austin himself declared he did not regret the loss of liberty, and was happy to be with his father.

About a month after their arrival at the Tower, Sir Reginald and Father Ralph underwent their examination; and Sir Reginald's property being confiscated, and bestowed with the title on Cuthbert, the latter started soon after with a numerous train of servants and armed men for Cornwall. A few days before their departure, Harkwright, who had spent all his money, and begun to fear that he might starve amidst the riches of London, came to him and begged to be admitted into his service; to which Cuthbert agreed, thinking he might be servicable from his knowledge of the place and country. The journey, being on horseback, was slow and fatiguing, and it was spring ere they reached Penzance.

The day of their arrival the sky was overcast, dark clouds had rolled up from the sea, and hovered in fantastic forms over their heads, giving vent at times to their pent-up anger in heavy showers of rain, when again a bright, though transient gleam of

sunshine would occasionally enliven the scene. Just as the party turned into the avenue a ray of light shot from the lurid heavens, like a smile of irony on a countenance darkened by the brooding storm of passion: the trees, the house, the distant hills, all stood out in strange relief against the leaden sky, until the sunbeam faded, and in heavy drops the rain began to fall; and so, amid the tears and smiles of a spring day, Cuthbert returned to the home he had quitted fifteen years before.

There is always a certain feeling of sadness in revisiting places from which we have been long absent, but this is especially the case when great changes have been wrought in ourselves and in those we left behind. It was natural, then, that Cuthbert, who returned under such peculiar circumstances to Bron-Well, should experience sorrow rather than joy at the sight of those familiar objects, each of which was linked with some reminiscences of his boyhood. *There* were the steps on which his father stood when last he parted from him; his mother, brother and sister-in-law beside him, watching his departure. How well he remembered that day! His father's blessing, his mother's anxious face, the affectionate farewell of Reginald and his young wife, all were present to his mind as though they were occurrences of the previous day, yet fifteen years had passed, and all the actors in that scene were dead except himself and his brother; and between them the separation was as great as if death *had* severed the ties which bound them.

Adelina addressed a few words to her husband, but he heeded her not, and the party rode into the courtyard and dismounted in silence.

The sheriff's men had been warned, by a messenger, sent on from London a week before the departure of Cuthbert, to give up the house to him when he arrived, and had in consequence left the premises.

The place was in great disorder, and Cuthbert, having had a fire lit in one of the rooms, for the evening was damp and chilly, advised Adelina to remain by it until he returned from giving his directions.

She had sent away her maids, but soon regretted that she had not retained some one with her; all seemed so lonely and silent. As the fire blazed up, the figures in the tapestry became so distinct that they looked as if they were about to step down from the walls. Tired and weary she leant her head upon her hand and closed her eyes; presently, half asleep, she fancied the room became peopled with strange personages, who walked to and fro gazing on her with astonishment; she felt she was an intruder, and trying to arise she awoke. All had vanished, save one figure—Cuthbert was standing near her; there were lights in the room.

'I found you asleep,' he remarked. 'What think you of our new residence?'

'Truly I scarce can say, for I have seen little of it, and am much tired after the journey. All will doubtless look brighter on the morrow,' replied Adelina.

When she rose the next morning she felt more cheerful, and all did look brighter except her husband.

He showed her over the house. When they reached the chapel, he stood silently gazing for a few minutes, as he probably thought of the days when he knelt beside his brother at the foot of the altar both happy to be allowed to serve at Mass; of the many times he had there approached the sacred tribunal of penance, and received forgiveness of the faults of childhood and youth. O that same hand, he thought with anguish, would at that instant be raised to bless him, and some voice pronounce those words he had so often heard from the priest: 'Thy sins are forgiven thee. Go in peace.' But he felt that, without repentance, there could be no peace for him, and he tried to stifle his remorse by talking and laughing.

On Adelina the chapel had a different effect from that produced on her husband; she had been baptized and educated a Protestant; her conscience did not therefore reproach her with having known the true religion and abandoned it. The chapel was a pretty building, and its beauty struck her; there was

a something peaceful and holy in its appearance; she knew not why, but it soon became her favorite place of resort.

Hiding and hawking were now the principal amusements of Cuthbert, his wife sometimes accompanying him, but more often remaining at home. Having no serious occupations to engage her attention she found the days rather long and wearisome; for the poor now never came to the Manor-house for relief as in Lady Margaret's time.

From an early age up to the time of her marriage, Adelina had been at the court of Queen Elizabeth, to whom her mother was maid-of-honor; and so from her childhood, surrounded by worldliness, she had not that love of home duties and household employments, or that interest in the poor and sick, which was frequent among even the Protestant ladies of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Like all idle people, this want of occupation disposed her to listen more eagerly to any news her maids could give her, and especially such as concerned the former inhabitants of Bron-Welli. They had picked up some from Harkwright; and so she learnt the history of the seizure of Sir Reginald on Christmas-eve, the death of Lady Margaret at a neighboring farm-house, and farther, that her sister-in-law had left a daughter, but of the fate of the child she could for some time find no clue; but she often wished that she could have the little girl with her, remarking that 'a child would make the house more gay, and besides,' she added, 'it would be a charity to bring her back to her home.'

But little Barbara de Courcy was safe with Widow O'Reilly and Catherine; for though sleeping at the house of Bridget, it was with the latter that she spent the most part of the day.

At three years old sorrows are not lasting; then indeed most frequently the child is scarcely aware of its own misfortunes; so it was with Barbara. For the first few days she often asked where her mother was; but by the end of a fortnight she had grown quite accustomed to her new home, and all her affections had centered on Bridget and Catherine.

None of the townspeople suspected that the little girl dressed in the plain costume of a tradesman's child was Lady Margaret's daughter. In fact, except those who resided close to the Manor-house, few were aware that the De Courcys had a daughter alive; for one having died of smallpox at the same time as their second son, most persons imagined that Austin was the only surviving child. Bridget thought it more prudent not to undeceive them; she therefore called Barbara her granddaughter, and changed her name to Mary, for still greater security. One thing, however, troubled the good woman, which was, that being obliged to attend all day to the shop, she was not able as she wished to look after the child; nor indeed was it a remedy that she spent the greater part of the day with Catherine, for the young girl too was frequently busy at some work, or had to go out on a message to the town; and so Barbara would at times wander away from the cottage, alone or in company with Dame Barnby's youngest child, Susan, who, accustomed herself to climb about the rocks, would lead her little friend into dangerous places, from which Catherine had to rescue her.

Widow O'Reilly thought over how this might be prevented; and a month after Lady Margaret's death, Bridget, Dame Barnby, and Catherine sat in consultation in the little panelled room behind the shop. Barbara's supposed grandmother then suggested that, as Ruth was now old enough to be of great assistance in the cottage, and her cousin's services were not therefore really required, Catherine should come and live with her and take charge of the little orphan.

Dame Barnby and Catherine asked for a day to consider before they returned an answer, though the former was very anxious that, her niece should accept the situation.

'There is no better house in the town, Kate,' she said. 'You will be very comfortable there; she is a kind woman too, and says you shall be to her as her own daughter. Though we shall miss you much, 'tis well you should be so comfortably settled; you deserve it, dear child; you have brought great happiness into my cottage, and we all are in a fair way of doing well.'

Catherine thanked her aunt for the kind interest she showed

in her welfare, but the reasons which the latter urged to induce her to go to Widow O'Reilly's were not those which with herself were strongest.

To a mind like Catherine's the securing to herself a comfortable home was but of secondary importance, nor did it please her, except as it served to forward God's designs towards her, and enabled her to do more good. She was naturally careless about her own interests, with such strong attachments to her friends, that these generous feelings might have led to disappointment and trouble had not her good mother, who understood her character, turned them to their right end, teaching her in all things to seek God's interest and that of His creatures, *for the love of Him*.

In this instance, then, as was her wont, it was by prayer she sought to learn the will of God. And soon she decided to accept Bridget's proposal; for her mission in her aunt's home was completed. Dame Barnby and her children were Catholics. Ruth had grown up an industrious girl, and was of great use to her mother, and the whole condition of the family was vastly improved; so that she might leave them with the happy feeling that she had been the means of promoting their spiritual and temporal welfare, and might without scruple devote herself to the care of Lady Margaret's daughter.

So she removed to Widow O'Reilly's house, and little Barbara was intrusted to her care.

'Teach her, above all,' said Bridget, urging the sacredness of the duty, 'to love God and her faith. I found I had not time enough to give the sweet little one the care I ought; therefore do I call ye to help me, for I promised her dying mother (God give rest to her soul!) that her child should want for nothing. I know her dear ladyship loved you, and she would be well pleased to see that you were with her little daughter.'

Catherine understood the important task which had been allotted to her, and she devoted herself to it with all the intense love and earnestness of her ardent and generous nature.

When little Mary, as she was now always called, awoke in the morning, the first face that smiled upon her was that of her young guardian; and of an evening, until the child sank to sleep; she saw the form of Catherine sitting by her bedside working, and often her sweet clear voice sang some holy hymn to lull the little one to rest. It was by her side Mary knelt morning and night to say the prayers her mother had taught her.

Time passed on, and, happy with her kind friends, Lady Margaret's daughter seemed to have quite forgotten her early home; but a slight incident soon proved that all recollection of the past was not obliterated from her memory.

Not long after their arrival, Sir Cuthbert and his lady were one day riding out, accompanied by their attendants, and chanced to pass Widow O'Reilly's shop when little Mary was standing at the door. The child's attention was attracted, and no sooner had she seen Lady Adelina, whose figure and dress resembled that of her deceased mother, than she rushed forward, exclaiming, 'Mother, dear Mother! But her foot slipped, and she fell, and in a moment she would have been under the horse's feet, but a light figure darted from the house, and snatched her up in time.

'Is she hurt?' inquired Lady Adelina, addressing herself to Catherine, who, having just saved the little Mary, was holding her tightly clasped in her arms.

'No, my lady, I trust not,' replied the girl.

'O, what a beautiful child!' said the lady, as the little thing turned her head round and looked timidly at her. 'What is her name? Is she your sister?'

'We call her Mary; she is not my sister.'

'Her parents—who are they?' continued Adelina, 'and where does she live?'

'O, they are dead, and she lives with her granddame in this house.'

'Come,' said Sir Cuthbert, 'we have tarried here long enough; if you want to see the child we can send for her to come to the Manor some day.'

With these words the party rode on, to the great joy of Cath-

erine, for the presence of the aunt and uncle of her little charge made her feel uncomfortable; and when they were gone she fondly embraced her, scarcely knowing why, except that the sight of Sir Cuthbert brought to her mind the wrongs which the family of his brother had suffered.

Bridget had been absent during this occurrence, and when she returned Catherine recounted what had happened.

'I am sorry the lady saw her at all,' said Widow O'Reilly; 'but the child shall not go to the Manor; it is sorry enough I would be to trust *any one* in the house of so unnatural a brother, let alone Lady Margaret's child.'

Bridget's sentiments towards Sir Cuthbert were similar to those of most of the townspeople, who regarded with suspicion and dislike one who had been so ready to take the property and title of his brother, and who had evinced no sympathy for the misfortunes of his relatives.

For some time after Sir Reginald's arrest, nothing was spoken of in the town but the calamities which had befallen him and his family. It was rumored that he had been conveyed from Launceston to London, to be there tried before the King's Bench. The arrival of Sir Reginald's brother at Bron-Well led to the conviction that the former owner of the Manor had been found guilty of the charges laid against him. Harkwright kept an ominous silence on the subject. People at last grew tired of conjecturing; other thoughts, and the daily occupations of life, absorbed their attention, and the little town, for a while excited by the events we have related, sank into its usual quiet routine.

CHAPTER XII.

SOME days after little Mary's adventure, Widow O'Reilly was seated in her shop, her busy fingers engaged knitting, while her mind was occupied considering how she should prevent her young charge from going to her aunt. Only the day before Lady Adeline had sent a servant to bring her to the Manor, and Bridget had managed by some means to avoid the application; but she feared that a constant refusal would at last excite suspicion.

The opening of the street-door attracted the good woman's attention.

'Why, Larry!' she exclaimed, on raising her eyes, 'is it you? Many a long day it is since I have seen ye!'

'Well-nigh six months, methinks; and sure 'tis sad troubles that have fallen on his honor and the whole family since then. I was not at the Mass; for it is laid up with the fever I have been, and his honor sent me to one of his farmhouses for change of air. Ah, sure, when I went it is little I thought that I would never see them again in the old Manor; and her dear kind ladyship dead, and the poor children turned adrift like birds out of their nest. I cried like a child myself when I heard of all the misfortunes that had withered their happiness in one night, and scattered them like the dead leaves in the autumn wind.'

'Larry,' said Bridget, after a few minutes' pause, 'what are you going to do? I know that *you* would not be a servant at the Manor now, even if the gentleman would have you, which I doubt much; for they say it is not fond of Catholics he is, although brought up in the Faith.'

'Is it I pass the threshold of *his* house, which is not *his* house at all? No, that I would not,' replied Larry, indignant at the very idea. 'No; I came here to tell you that I am going to London.'

'To London!' exclaimed Widow O'Reilly; 'and sure how will you get there? The roads are infested with highwaymen; the party lately coming to the Manor were attacked, though armed and numerous as they were. O Larry, they would murder you at once!'

'Sure it is little enough they gain by it; and, with the help of God, I hope to reach the great town safe before winter. I have a brother there; maybe he would find me a place. But what I have most at heart is, perchance I might see my master and help him. The other day I met that traitor, Harkwright. 'Well,'

says I to myself, 'I will make him tell me where Sir Reginald, Father Ralph and Master Austin are.' So I stopped him, nor let him go until he told me all about them, he trembling all the while, for he don't like speaking about them. Good need he has to fear the vengeance of Heaven on him after so foul a deed.'

So you really think you will see them?' exclaimed Bridget.

'I hope it though it is sad news I bear him. He will be more afflicted when he hears of good Lady Margaret's death,' said Larry sorrowfully. 'And where is the little Lady Barbara? I have not heard speak of her.'

'She is here, Larry; and her dear mother bade me let Sir Reginald know it. You, then, must tell him.'

'Glory be to God! I will tell the poor father she is safe, that I will.'

'You shall see her too, that you may say to his honor that you saw her with your own eyes,' said Bridget; and she opened the back door and called to Mary, who ran joyously in.

'Poor little creature!' said Larry; 'she don't know the misfortunes of her family, and she is happy, like them little birds that sing when the storm is brooding all around; sure it is as well she does not know. She is happy and comfortable with you. I wish his honor could see her.'

'Are you going to London on foot?' inquired Widow O'Reilly.

'No; the good farmer I am stopping with, who is a kind man entirely, says he will give me a horse. And now farewell, Mother Bridget.'

'God speed you, Larry, and His blessing be upon you all the days of your life!'

The man left the shop, and a few days later he might have been seen riding slowly along the road which leads to London; but as it is not our intention to follow him on his long and tedious journey, we shall for the present return to Lady Adeline.

From the day she had seen little Mary she had constantly wished to have her. Not that she had any definite idea what she would do with the child, her only thought being that she was very beautiful, and would be an amusement and help to enliven the dull old Manor-house. Adeline had been accustomed to think that those in an inferior position to herself ought always to yield to her fancies; she was therefore not a little astonished and mortified when Widow O'Reilly, under various pretexts, refused to let the child go to Bron-Well; and still more when, on her proposing to adopt Mary, her supposed grandmother declared she never would consent.

This was a cause of great vexation to the lady, and she asked her husband to interfere, but he refused; yet still clinging to the hope of one day having the object of her desires, she spoke about it to a favorite waiting-woman.

'Truly, my lady must be much angered at the obstinacy of that woman, than whom none can be more foolish and perverse, the more so as that little girl is *not* her grandchild.'

How know you that? inquired Adeline.

'Why, my lady,' said the maid hesitatingly, 'I meant to say that she is some one else's child; and therefore the old woman need not be so loth to part with her.'

'Whose child is she, then? Some neighbor's daughter, I suppose, whose parents are dead.'

'Not exactly, my lady; but Harkwright, from whom I heard it, bade me not repeat it.'

'But I command you to tell me,' said her mistress imperiously.

'Perchance your ladyship would not be pleased were I to say what I heard.'

'Tell me at once; I will know what it is.'

'Then, my lady, she is,' said the servant hesitatingly—'she is—your niece.'

'My niece!' exclaimed Lady Adeline; 'impossible; that little peasant girl can be no relation of mine.'

'But my lady, she is in truth no peasant's child, but the daughter of Sir Reginald and Lady Margaret de Courcy,' remarked the maid, who perceived, by the flush of indignation on her mistress' cheek, that she was not best pleased at the idea of having a poor child for her relation.

'O, is that it?' said Adelina in a calmer tone. 'She is Lady Margaret's daughter. Then why will not that woman give her up? But never mind, I shall have her now. How did you hear this, Lucy?'

The waiting-woman informed her mistress that Harkwright had seen the child, and declared that, in spite of the complete change in her dress, there was no mistaking her—that she was Barbara de Courcy.

Delighted with what she had heard, Adelina sought Cuthbert, and communicated to him her discovery, and after much persuasion she prevailed upon him to demand his niece. This once determined, nothing could have deterred him from carrying out his will, although he cared very little about the child.

Bridget had timely warning of the danger now threatening the child.

The intelligence alarmed and saddened her, for from that moment she felt that there was indeed no security for Mary.

'I would never give her to them, dear Mother Bridget,' said Catherine, to whom she expressed her fears; 'her dying parent bade us not do so.'

'But, my child, how can we prevent it? Sir Cuthbert has many servants and waiting people whom he can send to take the poor little one, as the hawk does the young bird from its mother's wing.'

'That is true,' said Catherine sadly; 'but,' she added, as a sudden thought flashed through her mind, 'could we not leave this place, and take little Mary where her aunt and uncle will never mind us?'

'Sure that we could; and, glory be to God! the little one shall not go to her aunt's, where she would lose the bright jewel of her faith. It was well thought of, Kate. But,' continued the old woman, 'what am I to do with my shop? and where are we to go to? Young heads don't think of all that.'

The two sat musing for some time.

'I have it!' cried Bridget. 'You know Frank Pendle? Well, he told me he wanted to set up a shop, now he has come in for that little fortune, after his old aunt dying of the fever, or old age, or something of the kind; he hinted that my establishment would just suit him. Loth would I have been to have parted with it then, but now it is different, and he shall have it if he still be willing to purchase it.'

The good woman could not suppress a sigh as she looked around her comfortable little room.

But it was resolved that they should leave Penzance. Widow O'Reilly offered her shop for sale to the wealthy neighbor who expressed a wish to possess it, and the business was settled.

The next difficulty was to determine where to go. Catherine said she thought Exeter would be the best place, as she had kind friends there, who would doubtless help them, and being easy of access by water, that town was accordingly fixed on. To no one, except Dame Barnby, did they say where they were going; and to very few indeed did they make known even their intention of leaving the town. Everything had been quietly settled for the journey, though the day had not been fixed on which to start, when the news was brought that Sir Cuthbert had resolved to claim his niece on the following day; so it was determined to start next morning early by a small vessel which was going to Exeter, the captain of which had agreed to convey them thither. That evening they bade farewell with many tears to Dame Barnby and her daughters; and the next morning at the hour of sunrise, when nothing was astir, Bridget O'Reilly and Catherine wended their way to the sea-shore, where the little vessel was moored. Lady Margaret's daughter walked between them, holding tightly Catherine's hand, and probably wondering where they were going at an hour so early, without a thought that *she* was the cause of their flight, and that it was to save *her* faith, and to keep their promise to her deceased mother, that her generous friends were leaving their home.

When the sun at length rose, and the busy inhabitants of Penzance were beginning the occupations of the day, it was noticed that no one was stirring in Widow O'Reilly's house, which was the more strange as she was generally an early riser. By nine

o'clock a small knot of people had gathered outside, each giving his opinion as to what was the cause of an event so unusual.

'The good dame is sleeping late to-day,' said one.

'Maybe she is dead,' said another.

'I heard,' remarked a third, 'that she had sold her shop; but she kept it marvelously secret, so I scarce believed the news.'

There was a magpie perched upon her roof yesterday in the forenoon; 'tis an ill omen,' said an old woman, as she shook her head mysteriously.

At that moment the new owner of the shop appeared; he made his way to the door, and having given two or three vigorous knocks, which remained unanswered, he raised the latch and entered; all was in perfect order, but the inmates were gone.

'Well, my good friends, said the sturdy proprietor, coming out again, 'Widow O'Reilly is gone. Some while ago she told me she desired to leave the town, but she bade me tell no one until after she had left. She has done it rather suddenly, I must say.'

'The Lady Adelina was much offended, I heard folks say, because Widow O'Reilly would not let her have that little grandchild; but, poor woman, she did not like to part with the child; maybe that is the reason why she left.'

'Well, from first to last, Widow O'Reilly was an upright kind-hearted woman; there is no denying that.'

All concurred in this statement made by the new owner of the shop, after which the good people dispersed each to his own business.

It was not until late that afternoon that Sir Cuthbert and his lady heard the news of Bridget's departure. Two servants had been sent from the Manor to her house with directions to claim Barbara de Courcy in the name of her uncle; one of the messengers being Harkwright, who was able, his master knew, to give evidence, that the little girl was Lady Margaret's daughter. The rage and indignation of Sir Cuthbert were great when the servants returned from their fruitless errand. He sent men to gather what information they could in the town; others he dispatched in search of the fugitives, persuaded that they could not have gone far, and that they would soon be overtaken by men on horse-back.

But Sir Cuthbert had little chance of finding the object of his researches, for she was many miles out at sea while his messengers were traversing the country in quest of her.

CHAPTER XIII.

To the traveler of the sixteenth century who approached London from the west, by the way called Oldbourn a splendid prospect presented itself when, after he had toiled up the steep brow of the hill, he gazed down on the great city—which was not then, as now, enveloped in a dense atmosphere of smoke and fog.

To the right the parish church of St. Andrews rose picturesquely from the steep declivity; its massive tower and decorated nave surrounded by ancient elms; on the left were the extensive buildings of Ely-house, seated in the midst of pleasant gardens. Farther, in the same direction, might be perceived the gilded spire of the church of St. John of Jerusalem, and the Norman towers of St Bartholomew's Priory. Immediately below was the river, with its numerous bridges, and a forest of masts belonging to the various ships moored along its quays.

It was to view more at leisure this beautiful, and to him novel, scene that Larry O'Toole drew up his tired horse on the top of the before-mentioned hill, and remained for a few minutes looking with great satisfaction on the city. Many a long and wearisome day's journey had he made since he left the Land's End, and he was not sorry to have at length reached his destination.

The last rays of a summer sunset added a fairy beauty to all the buildings, to which Larry was by no means insensible, as his eye wandered from one picturesque edifice to another. The sunlight gave to the gilded spires a lustre no human hand could have bestowed; that of the noble Cathedral of St. Paul, which rose

majestically from the centre of a cruciform church, stood glowing with light in grand relief against the cloudless sky, while the line of high roofs and pinnacled buttresses, which domineered over the groups of gable houses, shone as though silver, instead of lead, formed their covering.

Having sufficiently admired this his first view of London, Larry began to consider where he should find a night's lodging.

He now, therefore, descended the hill, and soon after, for the refreshment of himself and his horse, put up at a quaint little inn in the outskirts of the city. On the following morning he proceeded in search of his brother, who resided, he knew, with a Mr. Norton. The streets at that period had no names, and the houses no number, so that it was by no means easy for one unaccustomed to London to find his way about. Some years before his visit to the city, Larry had received news of his brother from a traveling pedlar who had been hospitably entertained at the Manor; the man having related that he had been to 'great London town,' and that there under some sore distress he had received much aid from a charitable gentleman named Norton, 'who,' added the pedlar, 'had in his service one Patrick O'Toole, who marvelously resembles one of the servants here.' Larry, guessing this to be his brother, of whom he had not heard for many years, had asked a number of questions, and from the replies was fully convinced that his supposition was correct.

One thing had fortunately remained well fixed in his memory, which was that Mr. Norton resided near St. Paul's Cathedral, of which the traveler had given a glowing description. So, having found his way thither, and learnt which was Mr. Norton's, he knocked at the door; but here an unexpected difficulty arose, for the servant of whom he demanded if Patrick O'Toole was within, replied that no such person had ever lived with his master since he had been with him, and that was three years. While they were still talking, the owner of the house, an elderly gentleman, came past.

'Wherefore is there so much noise and talking, James?' he inquired.

'Please your honor,' said Larry, before the other man had time to answer, 'it is my brother I am asking for.'

'Who is your brother?' said the gentleman, 'and why think you that he is here?'

Larry explaining what led him to suppose that his brother was in Mr. Norton's house, the gentleman informed him that Patrick O'Toole had, indeed, been in his service, but that about four years since he had accompanied a nephew on a long journey, and that they had not yet returned.

'And now, my good man,' he added, 'what brought you hither? from whence came you?'

Larry then related the circumstances which had made him leave Cornwall.

Mr. Norton was himself a Catholic, and had suffered many losses on account of his religion. For the last fifteen years he had lived in great retirement. His house was often the resort of priests, and he felt much interest in the case of fellow-sufferers for the Faith. He told Larry that he would willingly do anything in his power for Sir Reginald and Father Ralph; and having given him the necessary directions for finding his way to the Tower, and instructed him how he might gain permission to visit the prisoners, he dismissed him, with the charge to return on the following day.

To Larry's great disappointment he was not allowed to see either his master or the priest, although it was a relief to him to know that they were still alive. As he was about to withdraw a man called him back, and asked if he would like to see Austin de Courcy, who was under his charge, and won his favor and esteem by his patient and dignified bearing.

The proposition was joyfully accepted, and Larry was at once conducted to the cell of his young master. On seeing the well-known face of the faithful servant, Austin's countenance lit with pleasure, though surprise for a moment rendered him speechless.

'How is my mother?' were almost his first words.

During his long journey from Penzance Larry had frequently

considered and planned how he should break the news of Lady Margaret's death; but now that he saw the anxious look and heard the inquiry of the son, he felt that he could not deceive him even for a minute. His voice faltered as he replied:

'Alas! your honor, she is dead! God rest her blessed soul!'

A mournful stillness followed this announcement. The servant well knew that no words of his could at that moment bring consolation to Austin; he therefore stood silent, inwardly sympathizing with the grief of his young master, whose tears fell abundantly.

The goaler now returned, and told Larry that it was time to leave, when at once he commenced fumbling in his coat-pocket, from which shortly he produced a small parcel, which he opened and presented to Austin. It contained pieces of moss and flowers, the dry and withered appearance of which showed that they had long been safely lodged in the place from which he now took them.

'I gathered them for you on *her* grave; sure it is very withered they are entirely, but you will like them sure all the same.'

'The boy pressed them to his lips, and before he could thank Larry the door had closed, and he was alone.

O'Toole returned the following day to Mr. Norton, who, being in want of a servant, took him into his employ, Larry making the condition that, should his former master escape from the Tower and want him as a servant, he should be at liberty to go back to him. Subsequently he was allowed to see Sir Reginald and Father Ralph. The former had heard from his son the sad news of Lady Margaret's death, and learnt from Larry all particulars concerning her end. It was a great comfort to him to know that his little daughter was with good people, who would bring her up in the Catholic faith. Sir Reginald told his faithful servant that both himself and the priest had received sentence of death, though for some reason unknown to them it had not been carried into execution, but it might be at any time.

'Larry, I have a brother,' he added, 'and before I die I should like to see him. He has abandoned his religion, but maybe the words I should now address to him would have more effect than those I spoke in the days of my prosperity. He lives on the Strand. Were he made aware that I was here, surely he would come to visit me.'

'It is not in London he lives at all, your honor,' replied Larry, who with difficulty restrained his feelings when mention was made of Sir Reginald's brother. Being questioned he disclosed the advantage Cuthbert de Courcy had derived from his brother's misfortunes, Sir Reginald listening attentively to the recital.

'Poor Cuthbert!' he said, when the other had finished speaking. 'He has wandered far from the right path. God forgive him, as I do with all my heart!'

Shortly after this visit all intercourse with the prisoners was stopped. Mr. Norton, notwithstanding, through the influence of some friends, obtained the release of Austin, on condition that he should be security for him, and farther, that the youth should visit the Lieutenant of the Tower at the end of three months, to show that he had not left the kingdom.

Mr. Norton resolved to take Austin into his own house, as the boy had no home to which he could go. To do this was not without some sacrifice of his own comfort; for having no children, and having always lived alone, and being now advanced in years, he disliked all interference with his habits and ways. He did not therefore relish the idea of having a boy of fifteen in the house; but it was an act of kindness, and he determined to do it, no matter what it cost.

Larry was sent to the Tower to conduct Austin de Courcy to his new home. He was likewise the bearer of a letter to Sir Reginald, in which Mr. Norton promised to take care of his son until the father should make known his wishes with respect to him.

Mr. Norton was agreeably surprised with his young visitor, who seemed most grateful for the kindness shown him, and warmly thanked his benefactor. His presence was not in any way inconvenient; for being naturally of a grave and thoughtful disposition, the late misfortunes of his family had rendered him

still more so. Occasionally he spoke with warmth and interest concerning his father, his little sister, or his home, but at other times he was silent and reserved, which suited Mr. Norton very well, for he was a man of few words.

One thought troubled and afflicted Austin. It was the remembrance that, while he enjoyed liberty and the comforts of a home, his father and the good priest whom he loved so well were deprived of both, and in momentary danger of death. Nothing but the express command of his parent could have induced him to leave them; in doing so he had been cheered by the hope that he might be able to devise some means for their escape from the Tower, and comforted himself with the thought that he would be allowed to visit them. At the end of three months he had not seen them, and had been disappointed in his hope of their deliverance.

The silent grief of the boy daily increased and drew the notice of Mr. Norton.

'Austin,' said the old gentleman one evening, after they had both sat a long time without speaking, 'you seem unhappy. Treat me as a friend, and tell me what saddens you. Perchance you are longing after your Cornish home, and miss the freedom you once enjoyed. I am waxing old, and maybe you find this but a dull existence.'

'No, no, sir: it is nothing like what you have mentioned, that grieves me,' said Austin earnestly. 'You are to me a kind friend, you have given me a home, when otherwise I should have been houseless. I am not so ungrateful to Providence as to forget these benefits, nor do I desire those things which I can no longer obtain. No, sir, that which makes me unhappy is the remembrance of my father and of the priest who are in the Tower, whom I can neither see nor relieve. O,' he added with still greater earnestness, 'could they not, with our help, escape from thence?'

Mr. Norton, while he fully sympathized with Austin's sorrow, could not here enter into his views. He was extremely prudent, and feared the ill-consequence of a failure. His young companion said no more; but he did not abandon his project. To him the accomplishment of his favorite design seemed easy, and he hoped in time to convince Mr. Norton of its feasibility.

At length, though not without reluctance, he obtained the consent of his kind host that he might make the attempt, with the promise that he would help him as far as he was able, though he was strictly warned to be very prudent in his dangerous undertaking.

Austin remembered that the little tower in which his father was imprisoned had a side door which led to the roof; and though the door was usually locked, he thought that Sir Reginald might yet succeed in forcing it, and once out on the leads, by means of a rope which their friends would bring, Father Ralph and he might make their descent.

This plan was communicated to his father, it was agreed that without delay they would attempt the execution.

The day for carrying out the project came. It seemed a long one to Austin. Midnight was the time fixed. Everything was prepared. He had earnestly recommended the enterprise to God. The shadows of night at length drew on, and Mr. Norton and the youth were sitting in silent expectation. The old Dutch clock in the hall struck eleven, when Larry, with another servant who was to accompany them, entered the room. Austin rose.

'May God bless you, and favor your endeavors!' said his aged friend. 'Were I young and vigorous I would go with you; but as it is, I fear I should be of little use. So I must needs wait here for your return, hoping you will bring with you the two prisoners. Farewell, my son!'

It was a clear October night, the wind was somewhat cold, as though by its keenness it wished to warn the unwary that autumn's days were almost sped. With rapid steps Austin and his two companions proceeded towards the Tower. Now and then they passed an armed watchman, whose flaming torch lit the way: in some streets a few horn-lamps might hang outside the houses, for the lighting of the city was, even till the reign of Queen Anne, left optional with the citizens, who suspended at

their pleasure many or few lamps, as generosity or parsimony might prevail with them.

It wanted a few minutes to twelve when the party reached the outer bank of the moat, where a boat was waiting for them, which they quickly entered and rowed towards the Tower.

'There they are,' said Austin in a low whisper as he pointed to the leads. Two dark figures had at that moment appeared on the roof, and Austin waved a white handkerchief to attract their attention. A few minutes more and a splash in the sullen waters announced that they had, according to agreement, thrown down a string with a weight attached to it. Speedily a rope was tied on to this string, and Father Ralph and Sir Reginald were at work drawing it towards them. The rope was heavy, and they were frequently obliged to rest, their friends in the boat anxiously watching their movements, and glancing inquiringly around to ascertain that none were nigh.

At length the rope was fixed at the top of the Tower, and Sir Reginald was about to commence the arduous descent when persons were seen on the opposite side of the moat. The two then lay down on the leads that they might not be seen, and the party in the boat pushed close to the Tower, where the dark shadow it threw on the water completely hid them from view. The persons were observed to stop and look towards the Tower, one of them pointing towards the top. Austin and his companions watched them with intense emotion, dreading every moment to hear the sound of the alarm. But they were soon relieved; for whatever may have been the object which arrested the attention of the strangers they appeared satisfied, and were soon out of view.

The party in the boat then emerged from their hiding-place. Sir Reginald and Father Ralph, having first looked cautiously around, next leant over the parapet, as if measuring with a rapid glance the height from the leads to the water. They then seemed to hesitate.

'My father is coming first,' whispered Austin, who, with head bent back and eyes strained upwards, observed every movement of the two figures in whose fate he was so deeply interested.

Larry and young de Courcy held the end of the rope firmly, while Jones, the other servant, and the boatman kept the bark steady.

After a few anxious moments Sir Reginald alighted in the boat, when he silently pressed the hand of his son. Soon, again, all eyes were directed towards the leads, watching eagerly the descent of the priest; and not until he also was seated in the boat did the thankful words, 'We are saved!' escape from the lips of Sir Reginald.

The fresh night air seemed pleasant to the prisoners, so long accustomed to the close atmosphere of a cell. And the thought that they were once more free, although not unmixed with the dread of being again apprehended, was exhilarating indeed.

Having rowed a considerable way down the river, on landing they recommended the strictest silence to the owner of the boat on the proceedings of that night, and then directed their steps towards Mr. Norton's house, where they arrived at about two o'clock.

The old gentleman had not retired to rest, anxiously awaiting the result of the expedition. Rejoiced at its success he received with courtesy his two guests, who expressed their gratitude for his generous hospitality and for the interest he had shown in them during their captivity. Mr. Norton replied that he had only done what any Catholic in his position would be glad to do, adding that it was but right that those who suffered in the same cause should assist each other.

It was agreed that Father Ralph and Sir Reginald should remain hid in their present abode for a few days, until the first excitement occasioned by the news of their escape had subsided.

At the expiration of that time, and when the keen search in London and the vicinity was over, Sir Reginald declared his intention of leaving England. He selected France as his future home. There was, he said, nothing to retain him in his native land; he could no longer live there in safety; while in a foreign country he might practice his religion without restraint, and pro-

cure a solid Catholic education for his son. At first he entertained the idea of returning to Cornwall to fetch his little daughter, proceeding from thence to Barnstaple and sailing in one of the ships which then traded between that port and France.

Both Father Ralph and Mr. Norton strongly advised him against so hazardous an expedition, alleging that it would be impossible for him thus to traverse England without being detected and arrested. So with much reluctance he yielded to their remonstrances, and it was settled that Sir Reginald and Austin should go on board a French ship then anchored in the Thames, soon to set sail for Calais.

'I wish much that you also were to accompany us across the seas,' observed Sir Reginald to Father Ralph on the evening which preceded the departure, the last they ever spent together.

'You, dear Sir, have now no duty to perform in this country,' replied the priest, 'neither have you the same opportunity of doing good as when you were a landlord. Therefore I deem it right that *you*, who have only your own and your son's eternal interests to consult, should go where you and he can best receive the succors of religion. But with me it is otherwise; the vineyard is large and the laborers few. I must needs remain and work so long as the Heavenly Father spares me.'

Mr. Norton was truly grieved to part with Austin. If at first he had some dread of his arrival, he now no less regretted the separation, which he knew he should much feel, from that young and thoughtful companion, to whose presence he had become so accustomed during the time they had passed together.

A few days later Sir Reginald and Austin were far away from the shores of England. Father Ralph too had left his place of concealment with the view of recommencing his missionary labors.

CHAPTER XIV.

WHILE the events narrated in the foregoing chapters occupied the attention of Sir Reginald and his friends, Cuthbert passed his time apparently in ease and enjoyment, but in truth harassed by remorse, and deriving little pleasure from the rude grandeur of county life in the sixteenth century.

Among the diversions with which he endeavored to cheer his days and drown the voice of conscience, the chase took a prominent part. He had become popular with the thinly-scattered gentry of the county, whom he invited to his feasts and stag-hunts, and gratified by multiplied amusements.

One afternoon Cuthbert had returned from hunting the deer which abounded in the park. He had been accompanied by none but his own attendants. The last echoes of the hunting-horn had died away in the surrounding woods and groves; the courtyard, which had for a few minutes been the scene of commotion and noise, had now sunk into its usual silence. Still Sir Cuthbert stood on the doorstep gazing through the archway up the long avenue.

'Why will you not enter, my Lord Cuthbert?' said the Lady Adelina, who had just descended to the hall.

He was about to do as he was asked when his attention was arrested by a man whom he saw running at full speed down the avenue. He waited, therefore, until the breathless and panting messenger had reached him.

'What news bring you in so great haste?' he inquired.

'O, noble sir, terrible news!' said the young man, as soon as he was able to speak. 'Strangers from Spain, they say, have landed at Mousehole: they have burnt it, and now they are advancing towards our town. Those whom they have driven from their homes have brought us the tidings.'

'And what want you with me?' asked Sir Cuthbert coldly.

'The townspeople sent me,' replied the messenger, 'to beg of you to come with your men, and to aid us to repel these marauders.'

Cuthbert consented, for his pride was flattered by an application made to him in this moment of danger by the people of

Penzance, who had hitherto regarded him with but little friendship.

'Go not thither, I pray thee,' exclaimed Adelina, endeavoring to hold him back; 'thou mightest be killed!'

But Sir Cuthbert was by no means deficient in courage, and laughing at her fears, he tore himself from her grasp.

He gave orders that all his servants capable of bearing arms should accompany him, and at the head of this small and strangely-equipped regiment, he started for the town.

On leaving the courtyard, he perceived Harkwright in the ranks of his followers, but having only a poor opinion of that attendant's courage, he remarked to him scornfully that he might as well remain at home and protect the Manor. Delighted with this permission, Andrew quickly retired to the kitchen, where an aged fellow-servant was seated, and having carefully loaded the musket he had brought with him, he then placed it in a corner of the room. His companion, who had watched him, attentively, inquired the motive of this precaution, and why he had not given the weapon to those who were going to fight, instead of keeping it for himself.

'No, no,' replied Andrew; 'those Spaniards may perchance come hither; and I will not be without aught to defend myself.'

Meanwhile Sir Cuthbert and his party had reached the town. But instead of finding, as he had expected, men willing to defend themselves and their homes, and desirous of following any leader who should present himself, he saw in all around him nothing but an anxiety to save themselves, and what goods they could collect, by instant flight, while they left the town to the mercy of the invaders.

The place presented a scene of indescribable confusion; the fugitives who had brought tidings of the spaniards' arrival having spread terror among the inhabitants by the accounts they gave of their ruthless barbarity. Men and women were busy carrying off articles of value or of use from their homes; groups of frightened children clung round their no-less-terrified mothers: there was calling and shouting and weeping to be heard on all sides. The flames which rose from Newlyn increased the alarm of the panic-stricken inhabitants, by warning them of the fast approach of the danger.

Sir Cuthbert, who was on horseback, found it impossible to proceed up the narrow and crowded street; he therefore remained at the entrance, viewing with astonishment the strange scene before him.

It was Thomas Tregarthen, and not the townspeople, as the messenger had expressed it, who had sent for Sir Cuthbert, and on seeing him he pushed his way through the crowd, and approaching the rider, said:

'I salute you, good sir. You have come hither to aid us in this our sore distress. Pray tell me what you think of this matter.'

'What do I think?' replied Sir Cuthbert contemptuously. 'Why, that never did I see folk more resigned than these to their fate; truly they seem determined that the town shall be empty when their visitors come. I suppose they deem it more prudent to retire and allow their homes to be destroyed than to remain like brave men and defend them.'

'Your words are too true; and it is because I could not rally them that I sent to crave your powerful assistance. But this exceeding fear which has seized upon them, Sir Cuthbert, is not the effect of cowardice, but takes its rise from a strange prophecy written, in ages gone by, in the cornish tongue, and which says that a time will come when "Strangers landing on the rocks of Merlin will burn Paul's Church, Penzance and Newlyn." Now the people think that *these* are the strangers mentioned, and that if they are to burn the town, why then naught can prevent the prophecy from coming true.'

'Then, my good friend,' replied Sir Cuthbert, smiling ironically, 'there is nothing to be done, but we must needs wait patiently for the accomplishment of this prophecy. I see well that I can be of no service to you.'

The conversation was here interrupted by a cry that re-echoed through the town. 'They come, they come!' exclaimed voices on every side.

A precipitous flight ensued. Sir Cuthbert, however, could not bring himself to imitate the example of the fugitives, and turning his horse in the opposite direction, and facing the enemy, he cried in a loud voice, 'Let all brave men follow me!'

Without looking to see if his appeal had been responded to, he rushed forward. He had not proceeded far when a bullet from the invaders struck his horse; the animal and its rider fell over. His followers at once fled, and the Spaniards, without opposition, entered the deserted town, and finding little to plunder, they at once set fire to it.

Sir Cuthbert was not hurt; he had rolled into a bush of furze, and remained hidden till the enemy had passed, when rising cautiously he proceeded by a circuitous road to join the people who had assembled on a neighboring hill, and were from thence watching the conflagration.

The flames rose high, and leaped from roof to roof like fiery monsters; the red glare being reflected in the ocean's billows, shedding a glow on the sky which made the setting sun look pallid.

At sunrise a cheerful little town stood there with many a happy home in it, and joyous hearts and bright faces welcomed the dawn of another day, little thinking that *that* day was to be one of fearful destruction; and now sunset witnessed naught but smouldering ruins and disconsolate families.

The Spaniards perhaps had intended to advance farther inland in search of booty; but the inhabitants of Penzance, now that the prophecy concerning their town was accomplished, regained courage, and rushed with violence down the hill, when the astonished invaders took to flight, and having reached their ships, quickly spread their white sails to the evening breeze, and departed, to the infinite joy of the pursuers, who, nevertheless, now increased to large numbers on the beach, intimated that any farther attempt to land would meet with resistance.

We must now return to the Manor, where Harkwright and his companion sat enjoying themselves in the kitchen. The former was congratulating himself on his good luck in remaining at home, where he fancied he was in safety; but it is in vain that the wicked search to elude the vengeance of God. Penance alone can disarm Him. And oftentimes while they endeavor by human prudence to avoid His threatened judgements, they rush blindly to the very spot where God's wrath awaits them.

'Well, Thomas,' said Andrew, 'I doubt not but *we* are safe; they will never think of coming here,'

'Don't know that,' replied his companion, shaking his head. 'What sound is that?'

Both listened anxiously.

'I will go and bar the hall-door,' said the old man, 'and do you, Andrew, run and make fast the one at the end of the corridor, the one leading from the old chapel you know.'

Harkwright turned pale—he knew the door but too well—and hesitated.

'Come, be ye quick,' said his companion. 'While you loiter here they may enter.'

Andrew seized his gun resolutely, and left the kitchen. But as he approached the fatal spot he trembled with fear at the recollection of the treacherous deed he had there perpetrated.

At that moment a figure appeared at the open door; and Andrew, losing all presence of mind, raised his gun and fired, he knew not where or at what. The discharge was returned from without almost immediately, when there followed a loud scream; the report of the gun-shots resounded through the vaulted halls of the old Manor. A thick white smoke clouded the scene, which, clearing by degrees, rolling off in fantastic forms, the lifeless but still bleeding form of Andrew Harkwright was discovered lying prostrate on the stone floor. The soul of the unhappy man was already before its Judge.

Thomas had heard the shots. Having waited anxiously for a few minutes, when all was silent he hastened to the spot, and knelt down by the side of the dead body. The bullet had pierced the heart and he soon perceived that life was extinct—so leaving the inanimate remains of his fellow-servant, the old

man proceeded at once to his mistress' apartment to warn her and her maids of the danger.

He saw from the window a party of Spaniards, who were evidently seeking for some entrance less guarded than that where they had shot Andrew. They were in number about twenty, who, having seen the Manor-house in the distance, had separated from their comrades, hoping to find a more plentiful booty. Thomas was well aware that resistance was impossible, as he was the only man in the house.

Lady Adelina was seated surrounded by her waiting-women, who were employed in various kinds of works, when the old servant entered.

'My gracious lady,' he said, 'I bear you ill-tidings.'

She turned pale at these words.

'Sir Cuthbert!' she exclaimed, 'is *he* dead or wounded?'

'No, my lady, no harm that I have heard has befallen your noble lord; but the Spaniards are here. Harkwright is shot, we had better fly. I will go to the town and call Sir Cuthbert and the men to drive away these plunderers.'

Lady Adelina was too terrified and bewildered to make any remark, so her maids hastily collecting all the things they could belonging to her, Thomas conducted them safely down the back stairs; the noise now heard in the house sufficiently proving that the marauders had found an entrance.

In a sheltered and secluded part of the park the servant left Lady Adelina and her maids, while he went to inform Sir Cuthbert of what was happening.

More than an hour had elapsed when the owner of Bron-Welli and his attendants arrived in sight of the mansion. They had come too late, for it was already in flames. The grief and anger of Sir Cuthbert were so violent that no one durst even offer him consolation.

With great exertion a part of the building was saved, but all the more ancient portions and the wood-work were consumed; much also of the more valuable property, plate, jewel-caskets, etc., was saved. Before nightfall all was extinguished, and Lady Adelina, her husband and the servants found lodgings for themselves in the remaining part of the Manor.

At the first dawn of morning Sir Cuthbert rose, after having passed a restless night. He hurried out, and gazing with feeling of morose grief, not hallowed by resignation, nor softened by the thought that he was an innocent sufferer, on that which the previous day had formed his pride and his pleasure; but the old Manor-house now presented the appearance of a ruin. The front archway, the Tower, and the part where Sir Cuthbert had spent the night remained standing indeed, but of the main building little had escaped; roof and floors had fallen in, leaving nothing but the charred outer walls, and here and there might be seen the scattered wrecks of furniture.

'Twas ill-gotten property, and has brought me no good,' murmured Sir Cuthbert to himself; but quickly he drove the thought away, for there is nothing which wrong-doers dread so much as to own that the misfortunes which befall them are warnings which God, as a merciful Father, sends them, or that they are the punishment of their own sins. No, they do not like to feel an all-powerful hand so close to them; they would sooner attribute their disasters to natural causes, and avoid the consideration that *all things* spring from the One Eternal Spirit.

Disinclined to repair the Manor, Sir Cuthbert and his lady returned soon after to London, where the former endeavored, by a life of reckless dissipation and extravagant grandeur, to drown the remorse and sadness which constantly haunted him. Before he left Penzance the inhabitants, hearing of his intention of going to the capitol, begged of him to present a petition in their name to the queen imploring her to grant them money wherewith to rebuild their town. To this he agreed; and fully convinced that the request would be complied with on the part of his sovereign, he advanced a large sum of money to the townspeople, who were in urgent need, imagining that the queen would certainly repay him.

As it is not our intention to follow Sir Cuthbert at present to the gay capitol, which was henceforward the scene of his restless life, we shall return to Catherine and her friends, and trace their more humble course.

CHAPTER XV.

It was with feelings of deep emotion that Catherine revisited the ancient city where her happy childhood had been spent; and with great joy did she hasten, accompanied by Bridget and little Mary, to Andrew's house, where she knew she would be well received.

Nor was she disappointed in her expectation. The old couple were delighted to see her, although astonished at her unexpected arrival, and much puzzled to know who her two companions were. When they had rested themselves,

'Now, Catherine, my child,' said the old man kindly, 'you must tell us all that hath befallen you since last we saw you, and what you now intend doing; and fear not to ask of us all you need—my good dame and I will help you as much as in us lies.'

Catherine related in a few simple words the principal events of her life at Penzance, explaining at the same time who Bridget and the little child were; and when the former, noticing that Catherine avoided saying anything that was to her own praise, interposed, and described her earnest labors for the conversion of her aunt, her courage in saving Lady Margaret's daughter, and her devoted care of the little orphan, the faces of Andrew and his wife gleamed with honest pride on hearing that she, whom they loved as though she had been their own child, had lost none of those sterling qualities which they had long since remarked in her.

Then they said that they would take a little time to consider what she had now best do, asking her not to forget to pray fervently that they might all be guided to do what was right.

Catherine and her two companions spent some days in peaceful happiness with the good clothier, who would not hear of their lodging elsewhere but in his house.

One morning Andrew and his wife asked their young friend to come with them into their little back parlor, as they wished to speak to her.

The old man told her that he had come to the conclusion that it would be safe for her to fix her abode at Exeter, as there was no likelihood that Sir Cuthbert would ever gain tidings that his niece was there; so he advised them to take a little cottage which he knew of in the neighborhood.

'You remember, my dear child,' he added, 'that ere you left us you placed in my hands a part of your money, which I forthwith put out to the best advantage for you; and now, as you will require some of it to establish your new home, I remit to you the sum of ten pounds. I feel sure you will make a good and wise use of it, Kate.'

Catherine was delighted and astonished on learning that her little fortune had so much increased in the hands of her kind friends, and thanked them warmly.

Widow O'Reilly and Catherine settled themselves therefore at Exeter, and the latter was able to add to their means by doing embroidery and various kinds of needlework, for which Dame Andrew found her numerous customers among the ladies of the neighborhood; and when it was discovered that she excelled in this employment, she was also asked to come to different houses to give instructions to those who wished to learn her art. In this way she was never in want of occupation. Bridget, too, could gain money by her spinning, in which she was very skillful.

Theirs was a happy and peaceful little home. Their wants being few and their industry great, they were able, not only to support themselves comfortably, but also to assist those who stood in need of it. Catherine had also learnt from Lady Margaret the property of different medical herbs, and how to make divers ointments and remedies for the sick, which knowledge she now turned to good use, and her poorer neighbors soon found

that she was of great assistance by the bedside of the sick or dying, not only by reason of this knowledge, but also from her kind and cheerful disposition.

There was another good work towards which Catherine had always felt much attracted, and for which she seemed specially suited—it was the instruction of children, for blended with her steady rectitude of purpose and strong intelligence, there was a childlike simplicity and gaiety that easily won the hearts of children. Finding, therefore, that there were among the poorer inhabitants many little Catholics to whom no one gave instruction, she obtained the parents' consent that she should teach them, who at once gladly acceded. Accordingly, when the day's work was over, the young girl might be seen surrounded by a troop of little ones explaining to them, with wonderful patience, the great truths of religion. It was a difficult task, but she succeeded, and, moreover, she made the instruction pleasing to her little pupils by the edifying stories she recounted to them, which interested them and served to fix in their memory what she taught.

But it must not be imagined that these occupations made her neglect that which she justly regarded as one of her first duties, namely, the education of Lady Margaret's daughter: this, it may be truly said, was the great object of her life. While Bridget, with motherly care, looked after the little child's bodily comfort, Catherine instilled into her heart the love of God and of her neighbor, and imparted to her all the instruction which she herself possessed. The task was likely to be one of long duration, for no tidings had been received of Sir Reginald, and neither Bridget nor Catherine knew whether the child had any relations except her Protestant uncle and aunt; so that it was probable that many years must elapse before the scattered remnants of that once-happy home could be reunited.

The young girl was not unequal to the great mission before her; for not only had she, as had been already mentioned, received an education superior to that of most persons in her position, but her religious instruction, first from her mother and subsequently at the Manor-house, had been such as to impress deeply on her mind the great truths of the Catholic faith. Little did Lady Margaret think, when she admitted the little stranger into her household, that she might be instructed and be present at the prayers, that she was forming the mind of one who was to be the friend and guide of her own daughter. Often should we be surprised, when we do good, were we to see the effect which our slight and apparently worthless efforts will, after a time, produce; and especially when the return comes, as in this case, upon those who are dearest to us, like the moisture which the earth has given up on a summer's morn returns at night in beneficial dewdrops to refresh the parched soil.

It may not be uninteresting to the reader to have a description of Catherine's new home. When you had reached the end of the principal street, and found yourself on the road which led to London, there stood, at the period to which this tale relates, a house, detached and a little back from the road, having in front a small garden; behind was a meadow traversed by a murmuring brooklet, whose clear waters gliding into a neighboring wood, after meandering among the trees for a short distance, were precipitated over a steep bank, forming a mimic waterfall.

The house itself was an old-fashioned structure, as were all those around it; its roof was high and pointed, with two lattice-windows in it; the upper story projected, and was supported by clumsy-looking wooden posts, so as to form a little arcade underneath, where there was a bench on which one might, if so inclined, sit and watch the passers-by.

Those who have visited Exeter, and seen the *old houses* still left standing in High-street and other parts of the city, will better understand the kind of dwelling here described.

Its situation was most convenient, as in a few minutes its inmates could either reach the heart of the old city or find themselves among the beautiful combs and lanes of Devonshire. This, then, was Catherine's and her friends' home; old Andrew had found it for them, and it was not far from the good merchant's house. To his dwelling they and all the Catholics in the town resorted on Sundays and holidays; for he frequently

harbored priests, and on such occasions Mass was celebrated, and the faithful were able to approach the Sacraments; and when this happiness was denied them and no priest was there, they supplied for the want as best they could by praying together.

Catherine had gone late one afternoon to purchase some articles in the city, and as she passed the principal inn she was surprised to see an unusual stir in the courtyard; there were horses and servants and armed attendants; evidently some great personage had arrived. She inquired of the woman from whom she made her purchases 'wherefore was there such a crowd at the Golden Lions?'

The woman replied that a gentleman and his lady had come there from Penzance, and that the news had spread that that town had been burnt down by some invaders; more than this the shop-woman was not able to tell, and therefore could not satisfy Catherine, who wanted much to know whether the inhabitants had escaped, and whether any others besides the lady and gentleman mentioned had come from Penzance.

In a state of great uneasiness she hastened home, her mind painfully preoccupied with the thought that perhaps her aunt and cousins had perished in the flames; but the following morning she was relieved by positive information that all the inhabitants had escaped. Another cause of perplexity now presented itself. The persons stopping at the inn were no other than Sir Cuthbert and Lady Adelina, and the lady having been taken ill, they would so be delayed some days in the city, and there was the chance that some one of the company might recognize little Barbara or one of her two friends. Strict seclusion therefore was observed by them all; and great was their satisfaction when, on the fourth morning after the occurrence, they witnessed the departure of Sir Cuthbert and his party.

Bridget and Catherine now turned their thoughts towards Dame Barnby, and though they were assured of her safety, as all, or nearly all, the houses had been burnt, they feared that she might have suffered great losses. Catherine consulted her friend Andrew as to what she had better do. 'For,' she said, with much feeling, 'it would be most wrong and ungrateful of me to leave my poor aunt in distress—she who so long gave me a home. But how judge you that I can be of most service to her? Counsel me, I pray thee.'

'Very right it is, Kate, to be grateful,' replied the old man thoughtfully; 'and it is our duty to help our relatives when they are in trouble. Do you think your aunt would like to come here?'

'I think she would like it much; for she told me, after her conversion, that for divers reasons she would be pleased to quit Penzance; but *then* there were things which made her content to remain: such as having the opportunity of attending to her religious duties at the Manor, and being able to consult the good Lady Margaret; but, alas, all that has ceased to exist!'

It was accordingly settled that the young girl should write to her aunt inviting her to come to Exeter, where Andrew said he would find employment for her. As Catherine had money of her own, she was able to send a present to her aunt and cousins; it consisted of a strong homespun woollen dress and cloak for each, which she chose with Dame Andrew's assistance. This package, together with the letter, were remitted to a trusty messenger; by whom Dame Barnby returned a verbal answer to the effect that she was very thankful to her niece and friends for their kindness, and that she would come by the next boat.

At the expected time they arrived, and both parties experienced great joy at meeting once more. By Andrew's advice, Dame Barnby took a small shop, and soon she had a flourishing business.

One Sunday, when Widow O'Reilly and Catherine went to the good clothier's to hear Mass, among the congregation there assembled was a stranger. He was past middle age; he had a long flowing gray beard, and there was in his countenance an expression of frankness and benignity.

After Mass, Dame Andrew called Catherine to her. 'Come, my child,' she said, 'you must stay and see the good merchant,

a great friend of ours who last night arrived from London, after many tedious days' journey; he much wants to see you.'

So saying Dame Andrew led her young friend to the parlor, where the stranger from London was busily engaged in conversation with his Exeter friend; both ceased speaking as the two entered. The guest looked towards Catherine, and turning to his host, inquired:

'Is that the young girl of whom you spoke to me?'

Having received an answer in the affirmative, he approached her, and addressing her kindly, said that his friend Andrew had related to him her history, and that he felt much interested in her welfare. He then asked her several questions about her little charge, Barbara. 'I think,' he added, 'that I can give you good tidings of her father; for some time since a priest, and with him a Cornish gentleman, who was a Catholic, escaped from the Tower, and great search was made after them; and now that my friend told me of Sir Reginald de Courey, whose child you are bringing up, methinks it must be the same who escaped from prison; but whither he has gone, I know not.'

Catherine rejoiced to think that her little friend was not fatherless, and that perhaps some day she might have the happiness of restoring the child to him.

The London merchant had come to Devon and Cornwall to purchase cloth and woollen goods; Andrew was one of his principal suppliers, and he had long been connected with him. He intended remaining only a few days at Exeter, but he desired to see Catherine again before continuing his journey, and begged that she would bring little Barbara.

Accordingly, with Widow O'Reilly's permission, they both went the following day to Andrew's house; when the young girl was not a little astonished on the merchant's making known to her his desire that she should accompany him to London.

'We have no children,' he said, 'and my dame would much like to have one so good and steady as you to help her in household duties, for she waxes old, and you would live with us as if you had been our own daughter. Say, Catherine, will you come?'

'Leave Widow O'Reilly and little Mary? O no, good sir, never! I thank you much for your kind offer, but 'tis vain to ask me,' replied the young girl.

'I told you she would not go,' remarked Dame Andrew.

The London merchant sighed and seemed disappointed, but after a moment's silence he said:

'I am sorry I cannot take you to my good dame, for she would be greatly pleased; but I shall not press you; your attachment to Mistress O'Reilly and your devotedness to Lady Margaret's little daughter only make me think the better of you. But I come to this part of the world every three years; if when I return any change has taken place in your circumstances, and you are willing to accompany me, I shall be happy to take you.'

Catherine smiled, as though she thought it were not very probable that any such change would occur; she thanked the good merchant nevertheless, and bidding him farewell, departed.

Widow O'Reilly was delighted when she heard what had happened, and that Catherine had refused to go to great London.

A few days after the merchant departed, and the young girl soon forgot all about him and his promised visit at the end of three years.

CHAPTER XVI.

HAPPY and peaceful was the life which Barbara de Courey led with Widow O'Reilly and Catherine. Quite as happy as it could have been had she remained in her paternal home.

She was a thoughtful and silent child, yet had within her a deep calm joy. The birds, the trees, the flowers, the murmuring brooks, were companions to her, and spoke to her little heart of the love of God their Creator. She was affectionate towards her kind friends, and had in them that entire confidence which

makes childhood so beautiful and so free from care. What they said she implicitly believed; that they would provide her with all she stood in need of she felt sure, or rather, it would be more correct to say that the thought that it could be otherwise never crossed her mind, and so she lived on happy and content, finding in Bridget and Catherine all she desired.

When spring came she loved to gather the sweet-scented violets which grew in the shady lanes, and to fill her little apron with primroses and cowslips, which she brought home to adorn their cottage. The meadow at the back of the house belonged to a good-natured neighbor, who allowed the little trespasser to wander there in search of flowers. By the stream she plucked the large pale-blue forget-me-not; or, in the summer months, would return home in triumph with a bunch of yellow water-iris.

The little garden in front of the cottage was one of her chief delights; it was situated on the sunny slope which intervened between the dwelling and the road, and although very small, was well stocked with common hardy plants, such as then adorned gardens, when *flowers* reigned supreme, and *foliage plants* were unthought of. It was a spot such as Shakespeare describes when he says:

'I know a bank where the wild thyme blows,
Where oxlips and the nodding violets grow;
Quite over-canopied with luscious woodbine,
With sweet musk-roses, and with eglantine.'

The care of this fragrant garden had been intrusted to Barbara, and in it she would labor with childish gravity; now trying to keep the trailing woodbine within bounds, then pulling up a weed which had intruded itself among the flowers; or she would carefully tie up the 'sweet musk-roses,' and draw back the wayward shoots that would push through the hedge and peep on to the road, which view of the world did not improve their appearance; for when their little mistress had drawn them in again she generally found that their green glossy leaves were covered with dust, or had trailed in the mud, or a goat passing that way had made a meal off the tender shoots.

'I think, Barbara,' Catherine used to say to her, 'that the branches of your rose-trees are like foolish children that wander from their parents' home, and meet with many mishaps which would not have befallen them had they remained and done their duties as becomes good children.'

'I will never wander from you, sister Kate, and granddame,' the child would reply.

Catherine took pleasure in making her young pupil see in the flowers emblems of higher things, thus, one morning Barbara called her to see a beautiful white convolvulus which had just unfolded its snowy blossom. After having duly admired it,

'Knowest thou, little sister, what that flower is like?' she said. 'I will tell thee. It is like the pure soul of a child, quite spotless, and open, so that all can see into it; and it looks towards the sun as the innocent soul does towards God, from whom it receives all.'

That afternoon there was a heavy shower; when it had ceased Barbara ran out to look at her convolvulus. Alas, the rain had beaten it to the ground, where it lay much torn and soiled. Picking it up she took it to Catherine, who was working in the kitchen.

'Ah, see, the lovely flower has touched the earth, and is all dirtied,' said the child sorrowfully. 'Sister Kate, it is no more like a beautiful soul, is it?'

'No; but like one that has fallen into sin. O Barbara, a soul that has committed sin is far more disfigured than this flower.'

These conversations, and the good instructions she received from Catherine, made a deep impression on that naturally thoughtful child.

Thinking that she would like to have companions to play with her, her kind friends asked Susan Barnby and some other little girls, who they knew would teach no evil, to come occasionally to the cottage; but when Barbara had amused herself with them for a short space of time she would steal away and either wander alone into the neighboring wood or return to Mother Bridget and Catherine, and reply, when urged to rejoin her young com-

panions, that she liked much better to be with sister Kate and granddame.

The truth was, that her little friends could not understand the quiet happiness she enjoyed in searching for her favorite flowers, listening to the songs of the birds, and watching the rippling waters of the little brook, the child therefore preferred the company of those who *did* sympathize with her.

She considered it a great treat to be allowed to accompany Catherine when the latter took work to the houses of those by whom she had been employed. There was one walk which was especially delightful to them both; it led to the domain of one of the numerous gentry who resided in the environs of the city. Part of the road lay through a forest; and beautiful it was, on a summer's day, to watch the fitting lights and shades dancing among the green leaves and across the narrow path; and sweet was the sound of birds singing, and of the breeze rustling in the tree-tops; and now and then, perhaps, a gay little squirrel might be seen bounding along the ground, or leaping from branch to branch. All these things were causes of innocent enjoyment to Catherine and Barbara. Then, in autumn, they loved to hear the withered leaves crackling under their feet; and they used to gather on their way the nuts which hung in rich clusters on the boughs, or the juicy blackberries which grew in the tangled underwood. In this forest, too, numerous flowers flourished. The wood anemone put forth, in early spring, its starlike blossom, and in the sheltered spots there was the blue periwinkle, and also that mysterious-looking plant called the cuckoo-pint, with its hooded flower rising among the spotted leaves. Many plants there are whose names recall the simple piety of former ages, which loved to link these fair products of nature with the honor paid to the Blessed Virgin and to the Saints; Such are 'Our Lady's Mantle,' the 'Virgin's Bower,' 'Our Lady's Cushion,' the 'St. John's Wort,' dedicated, as its name implies, to St John; and in old times the harebell was appropriated to St George's-day, and the guilderose to Whitsuntide. All which, as they walked along, would furnish Catherine with a topic, who would talk of them to her little companion, and of their meaning, and repeat also to her the quaint but beautiful legends connected with them. Sometimes, too, she would say something to her of their uses in domestic surgery; and in this respect the St. John's Wort was in especial reputation, and no less as an antidote against witchcraft.

There stood, in the midst of this forest, a solitary dwelling, inhabited by a woodman and his wife. The merry song of the woodman was ever to be heard accompanying the sound of his busy axe as he felled the lofty trees; the woman all the while sitting at the door of the cottage intent on spinning, and, like her husband, to all appearance cheerful and content. To reach their destination Catherine and Barbara had to pass this cottage. At first the industrious dame used to look with astonishment at the two wayfarers; then, when she grew accustomed to see them, she would smile and wish them 'Good-day;' and when, once or twice, little Barbara had ventured to approach where the woodman was working, to pick up some of the white chips that flew around, he had stopped and kindly bade her 'take them and not fear.'

Then on market-days the woodman's wife used to pass by her young friends' home; and once, when a violent storm had overtaken her, Mother Bridget had invited her in; and so an intimacy sprang up between the inmates of the two cottages.

It happened, however, that for some time Catherine had had no occasion to pass that way, and when business again brought her thither, a change very noticeable had come over the woodman and his dame; for although the axe was still heard working destruction among the trees, the song was now hushed. The good woman also had lost her air of cheerfulness, seeming sad and downcast. 'They have some sorrow,' thought Catherine, and she remarked the same to Bridget.

'Poor creatures! Thou shouldst ask if there is aught that we could do for them,' said the goodhearted widow.

The next time that Catherine passed the cottage in the forest she stopped, and addressing herself to the woman, with that genuine kindness and perfect simplicity which were prominent features in her character, she said:

'Mother Bridget and I are very uneasy, fearing ye have received ill-tidings; for passing by of late I never hear the woodman's song, and I am grieved to see thee so sorrowful. Is there any service we could render thee?'

'Truly it eases mine heart to hear thy kind words; we *are* indeed, in sore affliction, but thou canst not assist us.' The poor woman then proceeded to relate that they had a son, who, with his wife and a large family, resided at a neighboring farm; he had unfortunately contracted a debt which he was unable to pay, and he had come to his parents to see if they could help him; for the term allowed for repayment would expire in another month, when, if he were unable to answer the demands of the money-lenders, he would be arrested and his goods would be sold, and his wife and children would with him lose their only support.

It was hard indeed for the poor people to be obliged to tell their son that it was not in their power to assist him; but they could not say otherwise, for although their labor sufficed to support themselves, they were totally unable to supply the large sum he required; he had therefore departed with a heavy heart, leaving the good couple no less afflicted.

Catherine listened with interest to the sorrowful tale, and expressed her sympathy with them. On returning home she communicated the tidings to Bridget.

'Good Master Andrew has much money of mine,' she said, after she had pictured to Widow O'Reilly the distress of their friends in the wood, 'and what need have I of it? I have a happy home; thou dost not let me want for anything; suppose I were to ask Master Andrew to allow me to give those poor people the sum they require?'

'Thou hast a generous heart, my child,' replied the old woman, 'but thou must take counsel with Master Andrew; he will know better than I whether this be advisable or not.'

She went accordingly, on the following day, to the clothier, who was not a little surprised when she asked, in her usual simple manner, whether she might take out of the money which belonged to her a sum which amounted to well-nigh half her little capital. Andrew raised his eyes from the large account-book over which he was poring, and looked at her in bewilderment, while his worthy dame gave an exclamation of surprise.

'Kate, thou must tell me why thou wantest so large a sum; if it is necessary for thee, thou knowest I shall not refuse it; but if I judge it not to be for thy weal, I cannot, as thy guardian, agree to thy taking it,' said the old man.

Catherine named the purpose to which she desired to apply it. 'I commend thy charity, and am well-pleased with thee; but methinks this might be done without touching thy capital, which we men of business hold to be an evil practice,' replied Master Andrew gravely. 'I will not deprive thee of the merit of this good deed, especially as the man who has incurred this debt is, I know, the industrious father of a large family; but to buy a small farm he borrowed money from one of those Jews, all of whom are extortioners; and the crops of late having failed, he is indeed in great straits. I heard all this from one who lives near him. Now this is what I propose: that I lend thee the money, for which I shall not require interest, and that by degrees thou shalt pay me back *half* the sum; the other half I give as charity on my own account. The repaying of the amount thou borrowest will entail on thee, Kate, much industry, and the denial of many things which thou mightest otherwise have afforded thyself. Art thou willing to do this?'

'I am,' replied Catherine earnestly, 'and am most thankful for this kind offer; with God's help I will repay thee ere this day year.'

Andrew opened a drawer and counted out the money to her; and receiving which she returned joyously home, and related to Mother Bridget the arrangement of her good friend.

Early the next morning she started for the cottage in the wood. How lovely nature looked at that fresh hour, but especially to Catherine, whose heart was already so full of happiness! Every familiar object seemed invested with more than usual beauty.

Even that 'modest crimson-tipped flower' which Chaucer calls

the 'day's eye,' and the sight of which was no novelty to her, attracted her passing notice as she hurried on; and raising her eyes from the starry field to the blue heavens, she softly murmured, 'How beautiful are Thy works, O Lord!'

At length, with a beating heart, she stood before the cottage door; it was opened by the dame, who was surprised to see her young friend there at such an early hour. Catherine placed in her hands the leather purse containing the money, saying with a bright smile:

'A kind friend hath sent thee this for thy son; we hope thou wilt accept it.'

The poor woman was too much overcome with joy and astonishment to speak; she tried to utter a few words of thanks, but the young girl whispered to her, 'Thank God, not me,' and then quickly disappeared, leaving the woodman's wife to enjoy at leisure this happy surprise.

In the afternoon, however, both she and her husband came to Widow O'Reilly's cottage to thank Catherine, who told them that they owed more gratitude to Master Andrew than to her, since, under God, he had been the principal instrument in saving their son. 'He has given you half the money, and lent me the rest,' she said.

'When James is better off he will pay you both, never fear,' said the old woodman; 'that is, he will pay the *money*; but the kindness that moves thee to interest thyself in our misfortune, *that* we never can fully repay.'

Catherine had too much consideration for the feelings of others to refuse to consider the money in question as a loan, which the farmer could repay in event of his prosperity returning, but she remarked that neither she nor Master Andrew were in any hurry, and that they would willingly wait until it was quite convenient to their son to pay them. 'And,' she added, 'if this be not the case for many years, let him not vex himself on that account.'

Catherine worked with redoubled diligence; every week she was able to put aside a little sum, which in time amounted to a considerable one. She asked the woodman, who also did a little carpenter's work, to make for her a small box out of his pieces of old planks. The lid of it was nailed down, and there was only a little split through which a coin could be dropped, in this she placed her savings, much to the amusement of Barbara, who liked to hear the money falling in. Ruth Barnaby, who frequently came to see her cousin, also took great interest in the box, because, as Catherine soon lost the calculation of how much she had placed there, and as there was no means of ascertaining, it afforded great scope for speculation.

By the end of a year the prudent girl was able to pay her debt to Andrew, who commended her for her exactitude and industry—qualities which the old merchant, being himself a very methodical man, highly valued.

Although the farmer was not in a condition to pay *his* debt for some time, as, having six children to provide for, he could not afford to put much by, he nevertheless found various means of showing his gratitude to his benefactors.

Bridget and Catherine often received little presents of honey, eggs, or butter from him; these his wife, when she came to market, would bring to the cottage, and beg its inmates to accept. Once she brought for Barbara a snow-white pigeon, for which the woodman made a little dovecot; the bird was very young and quite tame, and soon learnt to come of a morning and tap at the window of the room in which Catherine and the child slept.

Happily did the days pass on. Catherine watched with joy the expanding intellect of her young charge; with tender solicitude she guarded her from every evil. She felt a holy reverence towards that pure soul intrusted to her care, and a love that was intense, like everything in her ardent nature. In the soul of that child she saw the image of God. Her first care, therefore, was to direct her young thoughts to her Creator, to instruct her thoroughly in her religion; all other learning, however estimable and useful, was, she knew, only of secondary importance.

There was indeed in Barbara's character something more than ordinarily beautiful; an unalterable serenity was perhaps its most

remarkable feature. The expression of her angelic countenance was never marred by those fits of sullenness, ill-temper, or passion to which most children are subject. She was very intelligent, readily understood and well remembered whatever was told her. Nevertheless she found the task of learning to read and write wearisome, and her progress was for some time slow. It was not that she did not try to lend her utmost attention to Catherine's teaching; but the fact was that her mind, on which the greatness of God and the beauty of nature made keen and quick impressions had not the same power of fixing itself on the dry, and apparently unmeaning, signs of the alphabet. When, however, this first difficulty had been mastered, and she was able to form words and find a meaning in what she saw printed, she advanced more rapidly.

A prayer book and one or two more works of piety, which belonged to her mother, formed all Catherine's library. It was in these little Barbara learnt to read, and likewise to say the Psalms in Latin, a language which it was then very usual for ladies to acquire, and which Catherine's mother, who had studied it in her youth, though she wisely judged that any great proficiency would be useless to her daughter, nevertheless desired that she should know enough to be able to say her prayers in the language of the Church as well as in her own. These accomplishments, and the doing of various kinds of needlework, constituted the principal part of Barbara's instruction; but here her education did not cease. That inward training of her heart and will, that checking of evil passions as they spring up, that arming of the young soul for the lifelong combat against vice, which is the very essence of a Christian existence, and on the issue of which depends his eternal welfare, that part of education, which is so often neglected by those who have the charge of children, was the portion to which Catherine devoted her utmost care.

Doubtless the beautiful scenes and healthful air of the country, with the charms of forests and glens and rushing streams at hand, ever varying in their aspect as the seasons succeed each other, in the first tender hues of spring, in the full glow of gorgeous summer, in the solemn grandeur of autumn, or again beneath the stormy skies of winter—doubtless these scenes make a deep and lasting impression on the mind, particularly of the young; and it must be far easier to raise to high and noble objects the thoughts of a child accustomed to dwell amidst rural beauty than those of one whose eyes have rested on no more elevating objects than endless rows of brick and mortar. Catherine unconsciously experienced this both in herself and in the education of Barbara. The peaceful woodland landscape in the environs of Exeter (far from having then reached its present magnitude), and the wild sea views about Penzance had no doubt, served to elevate the naturally fine mind of the former, and to preserve in her that purity and child-like simplicity of heart which shone forth in her whole person.

But to produce this effect the beauties of nature must be regarded in a *right spirit*, that is, as the manifestations of God's power and goodness, and as the gifts of a benignant Father to His children. This is exemplified in a beautiful passage which occurs in the life of Saint Elizabeth of Hungary. After this holy queen had been driven from her throne and reduced to great straits, our Blessed Lady frequently appeared to her, and revealed to her many things concerning her youth in the Temple; and she told her that during that period she was often rapt in ecstasy, and beheld in spirit the three Adorable Persons of the Blessed Trinity, which vision made her heart so overflow with holy joy, that returning again to the visible things of this world, *the very trees and stones were dear to her and she oftentimes embraced them with holy love, as being the works of her gracious Creator*, just as a child kisses the articles which have but belonged to a much-loved parent.

The starry heavens were among the sights on which Catherine and Barbara particularly liked to gaze; they knew nothing either of the names or of the marvelous evolutions of the celestial bodies. That God had made, on the fourth day, the sun, the moon, and the stars, ordaining that the former should rule the day, the latter preside during the night—that was all *they* knew con-

cerning the planets, yet they watched them with awe and admiration;

When Christmas came the day was always spent at old Andrew's, when the good merchant would also invite Dame Barnby and her children; and if among his acquaintances there were any unable to make rejoicings at home, he was sure to ask them to his cheerful dwelling where the yule-log burnt in the spacious chimney, and the mistletoe, the holly, and the ivy decorated the walls. This latter custom is, by the way, very ancient, for it is said in old books that the early Christians did at Christ-tide decke their houses withal.'

Fresh little voices sang old Christmas carols, and the evening was passed in innocent mirth. But the yearly gathering at Andrew's house had a deeper purpose than mere amusement; it was a time when, under cover of a festive meeting, the Catholics of the neighborhood could, without exciting suspicion, join in the exercises of their religion. A priest, whose missionary labors extended over the whole of Devonshire, usually contrived to spend Christmas at the good merchant's. In Catherine's childhood it had been Father Ralph's habit to do so, and he never failed to be the welcome guest of Master Andrew, until the benighted state of Cornwall had induced his superiors to send him to Penzance.

Amid the festivities of Christmas there always floated back to Catherine's mind the memory of that first and last midnight Mass at which she had ever assisted. That sad scene, and the death of Lady Margaret, which had so closely followed it, painted themselves vividly to her imagination at that season, and it was, perhaps, on account of the recollections attached to that day, that when Barbara was seven years old she prepared her to make her first confession on Christmas-eve.

The little child learnt her own history by hearing it often repeated by Bridget and Catherine, but she listened to it as to some strange and wonderful story, in which she could not imagine that *she* had had a part; it seemed to her so impossible to realize having at any time, lived with others than her good 'granddame and sister Kate.'

The fact that during the first year she had passed with them her kind friends had avoided speaking of her life at the Manor, fearing to renew the grief which the death of her mother had at first caused her, and the complete change of scene which had occurred soon after that event, had no doubt contributed to obliterate from her memory all recollection of the first three years of her life.

No farther tidings had been heard of Sir Reginald, and by degrees Widow O'Reilly and Catherine looked on little Barbara as quite their own, although the latter always cherished the hope that one day she might be able to restore the child she loved so dearly to her father, or, if he were dead, to her brother, and thus fulfill the promise she had made to Lady Margaret.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE third winter after Catherine and her friends left Penzance was an unusually mild one, even for Devonshire; instead of the slight frosts and sprinkling of snow which generally whiten the earth at that season, there had been almost incessant rain, accompanied by an unnatural heat. Spring had come, and with it fearful inundations; at the end of April the weather became intensely warm.

The old people of the place shook their heads, and said it was an unwholesome season, and that 'dire misfortunes would befall man and beast.' Nor were they mistaken in their apprehensions; there was much sickness in the town, and many died ere the trees came into leaf. Then the rumor spread that the disease was infectious; the houses in which the sick lay were shunned; there were hurried burials, and a general gloom pervaded the city.

Exeter, as indeed most towns in England at that period, had been frequently visited by the plague; the narrowness of the

streets, the want of cleanliness and proper ventilation, rendering infections more common than in our times.

Andrew bade Catherine not come into the town except when absolutely obliged. 'Do not come hither even to see us, my child,' he said, 'for thou mightest take the foul malady.'

There was an unusual sadness in the old man's tone as he spoke, and he and his dame affectionately wished their young friend good-bye.

'It may be a long while ere we meet again,' he said, as they parted; for mind, Kate, that thou dost not come to the town more than thou canst help until the visitation of Providence is past. Farewell, and God speed thee!

With a feeling of sorrow Catherine left the house; more than once she stopped and looked back,—Andrew and his wife were still standing under the wooden arcade in front of their shop,—then turning down another street she lost sight of them; but, still the thought of her good friends pursued her, she knew not why; she fancied it might be because she was not too see them for some time. She did her best, however, to dismiss the sad impression which the merchant's words had left, and continued her usual routine of home duties.

During the three following weeks the number of deaths increased to a fearful extent. Bridget and Catherine lived in hourly fear lest any of their friends should fall victims to the fatal disease. They were seated in the kitchen one evening, silent as people are wont to be when some great calamity afflicts those around them or threatens themselves; it was growing dark, and Catherine, unable to see any longer, had just laid down her work, when a knock was heard at the door; she looked at Widow O'Reilly, but neither dared say a word, so sure did they feel that evil tidings awaited them. She opened the door. There stood outside a man whom she had often seen at Andrew's, where he came to do a day's work when there was a press of business.

'Master Andrew, the clothier, lieth sick of this direful plague. As I passed this way, I thought I would just stop and tell you so.'

'Good Master Andrew ill!' exclaimed Catherine in deep anguish.

'Yes, and like to die methinks,' replied the man; 'but it waxes late, and I must make haste home. Good-evening to you both.'

'O Mother Bridget,' said Catherine, with tears in her eyes, 'I must go and see poor Master Andrew ere he dies.'

'Nay, my child, 'tis I that shall go this very minute. Stop ye and take care of Barbara; I will return in an hour. Perchance 'tis not so bad with him as that man said.'

Putting on her cloak, the old woman left the cottage. Catherine awaited her return in a state of indescribable anxiety. Two hours passed and no one came. She took Barbara to bed at her usual hour, and then remained in the kitchen listening to every sound on the road. Now she walked to and fro, then she sat down and tried to resume her work; but other thoughts occupied her mind, and tears filled her eyes as the recollection of all Andrew's kindness towards her since her earliest childhood occurred forcibly to her. Was she now to lose that sincere friend? Alas, she feared so! Throwing aside her work she knelt down and prayed earnestly. What must those feel who, in affliction, have not prayer as a resource?

Catherine felt calmer, and had just seated herself again when footsteps were distinctly audible outside. She rushed to the door and drew back the bolt; there was a flash of light from a lantern, and by it she recognized the face of a woman who kept a shop in the town.

'The dame who lives here,' she said, 'has been seized with the plague, they found her nigh my house and carried her in; but we durst not keep her long lest we, too, be stricken; so I pray thee lend me a blanket wherein to wrap her, then we shall have her brought here.'

'Yes, yes, bring her quickly; I will fetch the blanket,' exclaimed Catherine. 'Stop!' she added, as the thought of Barbara flashed across her mind. 'Wilt thou remain by her while I take the child who is here to some safe place?'

The woman shook her head, and Catherine understood that in

times of universal panic and extreme danger there are few who are willing to run risk, even when charity to their neighbor demands it of them.

'Then, I pray thee, have her laid on her bed in that room, and tell her that I shall soon be back,' said the young girl, who had already decided what course to take.

After giving the blanket to the woman, and preparing the bed for the poor invalid, she ran up to Barbara's room and dressed her, when both descended into the kitchen, took a lantern, and quickly left the house. For some time they walked in silence. 'Sister, where go we?' at length inquired the child.

'To the woodman's home, and there thou must dwell for a little while,' replied her companion.

'And wilt thou and granddame come, too?'

'No, my little one, we cannot,' was the answer.

Catherine felt her hand, which Barbara was holding, tightly pressed, and then hot tears fell upon it.

'O; do not weep, my little sister!' she exclaimed; 'thou wilt not be away from us for long. And listen, Barbara: each morning and evening thou wilt say thy prayers, as I have taught thee to do, and thou wilt pray for us, wilt thou not?'

'O, indeed I will,' answered the child.

After this they hurried silently on, Catherine's mind painfully preoccupied with the thought that perhaps before she returned good Mother Bridget might be dead. Yet what could she do? To have let Barbara remain in the cottage would have been to expose her to catch the disease, and she knew of no place of safety for her nearer than the woodman's house. On she pressed, therefore, with quick and anxious steps, along that forest path which she and her little companion had so often joyously trod. The lantern threw a lurid light on the objects immediately around; now and then the young girl cast a hasty glance from side to side when any unusual sound proceeded from the thickets. She lived in an age when lawless men frequented woods and lonely places, and although she was by no means a coward, she could not but feel some alarm at being out at such an hour; but this did not prevent her continuing her road—indeed, she never *did* hesitate a moment to go anywhere, by night or by day, when charity or necessity demanded it.

On reaching the cottage she knocked loudly; no answer was at first returned, but she heard some one stirring within. She knocked again; heavy footsteps were audible approaching the door.

'Who comes here?', cried a rough voice.

'It is Catherine; open, I pray thee,' was the reply.

Uttering an exclamation of surprise, the woodman opened the door.

'Lor's me, what has happened?' he inquired. 'Why hast thou come through the forest at this late hour? I thought it were robbers.'

Catherine explained the cause of her nocturnal visit, begging of the woodman and his wife to keep the child until the plague should have diminished in violence. 'I knew not to whom else but you to take her,' she said.

'And why shouldst thou take her elsewhere?' replied the good couple. 'Knowest thou not how joyful we are to do anything we can for thee, who hast done so much for us?'

Catherine thanked them, and, having tenderly embraced her dear Barbara, retraced her steps homewards even more rapidly than she had come.

Softly did she enter Widow O'Reilly's room and approach the bed, trembling lest the spirit should have already flown. A slight moan reassured her.

'Is it thou, my child?' murmured the poor woman.

Catherine took her hand; it felt burning. 'Good Mother Bridget, what can I do for thee?' she said.

'Nothing; but pray, O, pray for me!'

The girl saw at once that the fearful fever was rapidly consuming the strength of the poor sufferer. It is dreadful at such moments to feel powerless, as Catherine did; to know that the life of a loved one is ebbing fast, and yet to be ignorant of the means to ward off death. She had heard it said, a few days be-

fore, that all whom the fever had attacked had died, and that nothing could be done to save them. This thought now filled her heart with grief.

Complying with Bridget's request, she knelt by her bed and prayed. She prayed that, were it the will of God, her good friend might recover; and if not, that He would assist her soul in its passage to eternity. She prayed for herself also, that she might have strength to bear this new trial.

Suddenly the dying woman said anxiously, 'My child thou too wilt catch the fever; stay not with me.'

'God will protect me, I trust,' replied the other. 'I have placed Barbara in safety.'

'I would like to see a priest, but none is nigh. O sweet Jesus, have mercy on my soul!' murmured Bridget. 'Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for me! She is coming, and angels too! Weep not, my Kate.'

The poor woman gasped for breath, her aching head rested on the arm of her companion, who whispered to her words of comfort and resignation; the blessed name of Jesus was frequently on her lips. At length all was silent; and when Catherine bent closer still to her dear friend she found that breathing had entirely ceased—Bridget O'Reilly was dead.

Regardless, or unconscious, of the danger to which she was exposed, Catherine remained long in the room with the dead body, weeping and praying; when at length she roused herself and left the chamber of death, she was astonished to find that it was broad daylight. She opened the cottage door, for the pestilential atmosphere of fever filled the house. She felt giddy and her head ached, but the fresh air somewhat revived her; while she yet stood at the door she saw two men pass carrying a corpse.

We shall not dwell on the sad scene of the hurried burial; after which Catherine returned to her lonely home, fatigued and ill, her heart full of desolation.

Until then wholly occupied with grief and anxiety for Mother Bridget, she had not bestowed a thought on her own danger; but now she remembered with dread how infectious the disease was. Something seemed to whisper to her, 'Perchance thou too wilt die.'

Die—alone in that house, unattended, unaided! What a prospect! There is in every creature endowed with life a natural horror of dissolution. Catherine felt it, and for a moment her heart sank within her, while a strange sensation of coldness benumbed her limbs. But her fortitude, which the thought of death seemed to have shaken, soon returned; that Christian fortitude which gives strength to the weak and so ennobles those who possess it bade her look with courage on *that* which all must one day encounter. Was she not as well prepared to leave this world at that very moment as she would be in ten or twenty years? Her conscience told her that, in spite of many imperfections and shortcomings incident to human frailty, her life had been free from malicious and deliberate sins. With heartfelt sorrow she implored pardon for all her faults, and with filial confidence recommended herself to the Divine mercy.

She now felt resigned either to live or die; but one thought still troubled her—what would become of little Barbara if left without friend or home. The woodman and his wife would, no doubt, keep her with them and treat her kindly; but they were not Catholics, and they would either bring her up in a wrong religion or suffer her to have none; and what chance would there be of her being restored to her father or brother?

'O Lord,' exclaimed the young girl, to whom these reflections presented themselves with overpowering force,—"O Lord, I pray Thee to spare my life until Barbara no longer needs my care; but if Thou hast ordained otherwise, Thy holy will be done: and as not a sparrow falleth to the ground without Thy knowledge, so do I trust that Thou wilt guard that little one that no evil may befall her in soul or body.

Scarcely had she finished her prayer, when the door opened and Dame Barnby entered.

'I am so glad thou hast come, good aunt!' she cried; and weeping she threw herself into her arms.

Winifred was soon made acquainted with the sad news. She

had indeed, early that morning, heard a rumor that Widow O'Reilly had been taken ill with the fever, and it was to ascertain the truth of this that she had now come to the cottage. She had hoped at least to be able to succor her old friend. Alas, it was too late!

Catherine learnt with grief that Master Andrew was dead.

'My child,' said her aunt, 'thou canst not remain alone in this house; come with me. Thou lookest pale,' she added, gazing attentively at her niece; 'perchance thou hast eaten nothing this morning?'

'Such is the case; but my heart was too sad for me to feel inclined to take anything—moreover, I feel giddy when I try to walk.'

Dame Barnby was alarmed; she bade Catherine sit still, and stirring up the remnant of fire, she made for her an infusion of herbs, which she gave her to drink. Her aunt then proposed to take her to her own home; which offer was willingly accepted.

Carrying with them some few articles, they left the cottage, locking the door after them.

The town seemed abandoned. The grass had grown in many of the streets; one or two forlorn individuals were wandering about seemingly without any fixed purpose; most of the shops were closed. Catherine, who had not visited the place for some time past, was struck with astonishment and horror on viewing the change which a few weeks had wrought in the once-cheerful city.

'Is every one dead?' she inquired of her companion in a subdued voice, for the surrounding gloom and silence filled her with a solemn awe.

'Nay, not, *all*,' replied her aunt; 'though many a one they have carried past my house, to lay them in the earth, during these three weeks. And numbers have left the town in great fright, yea, and abandoned their dying relatives.'

'O, can it be so?' exclaimed Catherine.

'It is quite true, my child. In distress like this many lack courage to do their duty.'

Here the conversation ceased; but the young girl's active mind was already at work trying to devise some means for the relief of the misery around her.

They passed down one of the back streets, which was so narrow that the inmates of the houses might shake hands from the windows of the upper story with their neighbors of the opposite side. A group of dirty children were playing near one of the doors; among them Catherine recognized some of her former pupils, and stopping, inquired of one where his mother was; when she was told that she had been taken to the churchyard, and that father was there too.

'And with whom dost thou live?'

'With John's father,' replied the child, pointing to a boy a little older than himself.

'Dost thou remember the Catechism I used to teach thee?' asked Catherine.

The little fellow looked round to ascertain that his companions were not within hearing, and then said in an undertone.

'They say they will not let me be a Catholic any longer, and beat me when I say my prayers.'

'Who?' inquired Catherine.

'The man and his dame who have taken me to their house.'

'Keep up thy courage, my poor little friend; if I can, I will see thee to-morrow and try and do something for thee.'

Leaving the child she hastened on with her aunt, whose shop they soon reached.

Dame Barnby advised her niece not to go to the woodman's cottage until the plague had ceased in the city, for fear that she might carry the infection with her.

It was evident then, that Catherine would be forced to spend some days, perhaps weeks, in the plague-stricken town. She determined during her stay to do what was in her power to alleviate the misery of the wretched inhabitants.

She greatly pitied the unhappy position of numbers of poor children whose parents had died without being able to provide

for their support; and as there are always wicked persons to be found ready to take advantage of private difficulties or public calamities and turn them to their own profit, so in these instances there were not wanting those who, under pretence of being relations of the orphans took possession of them and what goods they had, neglecting and often ill treating the former whilst they kept the latter for their use. Catherine discovered that this was the case with the little boy whom she had accosted in the street. She questioned him more particularly on his situation which proved to be far from happy—indeed the poor child was in imminent danger of losing his faith and being brought up in ignorance and vice. Having inquired if he had any relations living and having heard that some of his mother's family resided in the small town of Honiton, she obtained her aunt's consent, and addressed to them a letter.

'Tis marvelous,' Dame Barnby remarked, when her niece had read the epistle to her, 'how thou canst say all that by making little marks upon paper.'

The letter was intrusted to a man who passed that way about once a fortnight with a pack-horse. And in due time one of the child's relations came to fetch him. Catherine never heard of him afterwards; but as those to whom he had gone were good Catholics, she was satisfied as to his safety.

By many a death-bed did the young girl appear as an angel of charity, soothing the last moments of the dying with words of hope and spiritual comfort.

Her aunt at first entertained fears that in discharging these charitable offices she would herself fall a prey to the fever. But Catherine assured her that living, as they were obliged to do, in the midst of the infection, there was as much danger for them each time they walked in the streets as if they entered the houses of the sick.

Good Andrew's widow also devoted herself to deeds of charity. Catherine who was frequently with her observed that the grief of her recent loss had sunk deep into the poor woman's heart: a look of melancholy had settled on her once-cheerful face and tears filled her eyes when she and the young girl spoke together of the many good qualities of the honest merchant whose death both felt so keenly.

One day, as Catherine was passing near an old and dilapidated house, her attention was arrested by the low moans which issued from it. She stopped to listen, and seeing a woman standing at the door of a neighboring house, inquired of her who lived there.

'An old man whom we call father Jacob,' she replied.

'Does he live alone?' asked Catherine.

'He does. He is an old miser, and has no kinsfolk with him. I did not see him leave his house to-day; perchance he too hath the plague.'

'And hast thou not been to inquire if he be ill?' said Catherine.

'I durst not,' was the reply.

Catherine hastened to her aunt's dwelling, which was close by, and related what she had heard.

'O, think,' she added with her characteristic earnestness,—'O think how dreadful it must be to die all alone! Shall we not go and succor him?'

Dame Barnby consented, and both proceeded to the old man's house. After knocking two or three times and receiving no answer, they pushed open the door and entered.

At the farther end of the poverty-stricken chamber lay old Jacob on his wretched couch.

'Who comes there?' he asked in a low hoarse voice.

'We come to bring thee help,' said the dame.

'Water—water!' he ejaculated. A violent thirst being one of the symptoms of the then-prevailing fever, Catherine understood the meaning, and at once fetched some water, which he drank with avidity.

'Good friend,' said the young girl softly, 'art thou easier now?'

'Neither thou nor any one else can bring ease to mine afflicted soul,' he murmured.

'But our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for you, can,' she replied.

A strange and wild expression appeared on the dying man's face while Catherine spoke, but he said nothing, and she continued to speak to him of the death of our Saviour and the mercies of God.

Presently his mind began to wander. Gazing about with an anxious searching eye, he seemed as one who beheld visions from the other world; sometimes after looking steadfastly at one corner of the room, he would move his head slowly round as if watching some object endowed with action; then he would start back in terror muttering 'Avaunt! avaunt!'

Catherine snudged. 'O, how fearful,' thought she, 'is the deathbed of those who have no religion!' Dame Barnby would have beaten a hasty retreat, had not her niece desired earnestly to remain and to instil thoughts of repentance and hope into the poor man's heart.

As the fever heightened, he became wilder and more restless.

'Be calm, and may God have mercy on thee!' said Catherine, in a grave resolute tone, which seemed to overawe him for he sank quietly back on to his bed, and remained silent during a few seconds.

'A priest! O, bring me a priest!' he suddenly cried. 'Nay, nay, he added almost, immediately; 'they will denounce me, they will take my money!'

'Didst thou ever know or practice the holy Catholic religion?' asked Catherine; and again her calm voice subdued the old man.

'Alas, I did!' he replied.

'Then, if I can find a priest I will bring him to thee. Beg, through the merits of the Passion and Death of Jesus Christ, pardon for thine evil deeds, and hope in His clemency.' Then, turning to her aunt, Catherine prayed her to remain with the dying man until she returned.

Leaving the house, she hastened to Dame Andrew's, and inquired of her if she knew where the priest was who often officiated at their house. But he avoided remaining long in any one place, and observed much secrecy concerning his movements, and so Dame Andrew could not give her young friend the desired information. The latter sighed; she was perplexed what to do. It then occurred to her that, as it was Saturday, it was not unlikely that Father Francis might come to Exeter to say Mass the next day; and so she asked the dame to be so good as to tell the priest, if he chanced to come, that a poor dying man wished much to see him, describing the house where he lay.

Returning to Jacob, she found him in the same state as when she had left; his agony was a long one indeed.

At times the poor man showed signs of repentance; but then again the fear of God's judgements overpowered him, and excluded from his terror-stricken soul that filial confidence in the mercies of his Creator so necessary to the penitent.

'I have abandoned my faith; there is no hope for me,' he would reply, when urged by Catherine to place his trust in the merits of Jesus Christ.

At length he sank back exhausted by the fever, which was making rapid progress; his eyes closed, and he breathed with difficulty. 'Death is surely coming now,' thought the young girl, and she knelt down and prayed. At that moment the door opened; she looked round—there stood Father Francis.

'Father,' she said, pointing to the bed, 'there lieth one who much needeth thy help; he told me he was a Catholic, and wished to see a priest.'

'Then leave me alone with him, my child.'

Catherine obeyed, and returned to her aunt's house. The evening passed on, and both sat wondering what had been the end of old Jacob.

'I hear some one at the door,' exclaimed the niece as she hurried to open it, and gave admittance to Father Francis.

'The old man is dead,' he said in a grave tone; 'and alas, leaveth much doubt on my mind as to his eternal salvation! He spoke not. Yet, when I bid him make interiorly an act of contrition for his sins, he seemed to understand me, and perchance at that moment the merciful God of heaven forgave his

manifold transgressions. But how fearful a thing it is thus to leave the care of our soul's eternal happiness or misery to the last moment!

All three remained silent for a few minutes; then the priest said to Dame Barnby:

'Good dame, I must ask thee to harbor me to-night, for I know not where else to go at this late hour.'

Winifred joyfully consented to lodge the honored guest; and the following morning both she and Catherine went to confession, for it was long since they had the opportunity of doing so; and at a time when death was making such fearful havoc, they felt the necessity of being well prepared to quit this world.

Both needed strength indeed—the one for the long voyage of eternity, the other for life's chequered pilgrimage, always replete with danger, which is the greater when we are left friendless in the world.

Poor Catherine! Ere the plague had ceased, Dame Barnby and good Andrew's widow had fallen victims to it. To describe the desolation of the young girl after these fresh bereavements would be impossible.

It was the end of July, when, quitting the city which had been to her the scene of so much suffering during the past months, she sought the woodman's dwelling.

The day was calm and warm, but not sunny; scarce a leaf moved on the trees, the song of the birds was hushed, and a marvellous sense of repose pervaded all nature. There is something melancholy in the rare moments of complete stillness which occur in a large town; they resembled the hours of quietude in the career of a wicked person who in intervals of apparent rest is brooding evil. But how different is silence in the country! How soothing it is to the sorrow-stricken! How it calms man's feverish desires! To Catherine's afflicted soul it seemed a soft balm. She stopped at the entrance to the forest, which recalled so many happy days, and gazing round on the familiar objects her tears flowed fast, yet they were less heartrending than those she had shed during the previous days which she spent alone in her deceased aunt's house; the thought too that in a few minutes she should see the little Barbara cheered her, and made her again hurry on. Another turn of the winding path and the cottage came in view before it stood Barbara.

A moment later she was clasped in Catherine's arms; still pressing the child to her with passionate love, the young girl seated herself on the door-step and wept.

The woodman and his wife looked at her with compassion; and when her emotion was a little subsided, the latter inquired kindly the cause of her distress. The tale of sorrow was soon told.

'Poor child, thou hast heavy griefs indeed! said the woman. 'And what has befallen thy house and goods?'

'My poor aunt made me bring all mine effects to her dwelling, and we gave up the house which Widow O'Reilly and I inhabited, for she said that Barbara and myself should henceforth live with her; but now that she, good Master Andrew, and his dame are dead, I know not where to go, or how to find employment by which to support myself and the child.'

The woodman exchanged some words in a whisper with his wife, and then said aloud to Catherine,

'If thou, Mistress Catherine, wilt accept our simple lodging, and partake of our frugal board, thou and thy little sister are welcome; yea, and dame and I are only too happy to be able to do all we can for thee.'

Catherine thanked them warmly; and it was agreed that she should stay with them until such time as she could find some one to arrange her affairs and help her to seek an employment; but she insisted on paying a small sum for her lodging.

Catherine's life in the forest was quiet and peaceful. She was sad, as might be expected after all she had suffered; but her strong nature, aided by religion, bore bravely the trials allotted to her by Providence. And then she had Barbara to watch over, and the thought that the poor child had no one to look to but herself redoubled her energy.

She thought of resuming her former employment of em-

broidery work; but many of the rich families had removed for a while, on account of the plague, and those who remained felt little inclined, at a time when all the neighborhood was plunged in distress by the late visitation to expend much money on articles of luxury.

Several times did Catherine think of taking a situation; but if she were to do so, what would become of Lady Margaret's daughter? She could not consent to be separated from the poor child whom she had promised to watch over; neither could she take her with her. And so they both remained at the woodman's; the young girl praying daily that God would make known His will towards her for, in spite of the woodman's kindness, she felt that she must be a burden to him; and besides, a life of idleness was most distasteful to one of her character.

The summer flowers faded, and autumnal tints crept over the woods; first among the forest trees the feathery ash grew golden and shed its plumes; the beech had turned to a rich bronze, which at eventide glowed like molten metal; the mountain ash was red with berries; the leaves from the limetrees came gently floating to the ground; the hardy oak alone still wore the green livery of summer.

One day late in October Catherine was standing pensive at the cottage door, gazing into the wood, where Barbara was playing among the fallen leaves, when the sound of footsteps coming along the path made her look in that direction. She perceived an elderly man, with whose appearance it seemed to her she was already familiar; as he approached she recognized the benevolent countenance of Master Andrew's London friend.

'In three years,' the merchant had said to her, 'I shall return again, and perchance then thou wilt accept my proposition.'

Catherine had smiled when he spoke those words, but now tears gushed from her eyes as she recalled them, and thought of the change which three years had wrought in her position.

'I have sought thee these two days,' said the merchant, who was now close to Catherine. 'Ah, thou hast had severe losses since last I saw thee,' he added, remarking her sorrowful countenance. 'And so have I. Poor Master Andrew, he was a good man and a kind friend! God rest his soul!'

There was a moment of silence while the newcomer mused on his departed friend, and Catherine felt too much emotion to speak; at length, turning to her, he said:

'How goes it with thee and with thy little Barbara?'

The young girl told him of her many trials, and how she had lived since her aunt's death. The good merchant condoled with her, and spoke of his own grief when, on coming to Exeter as usual to purchase woolen goods, he had learnt the death of his valued friends.

'Master Andrew's nephew has taken the clothier's business,' he added, 'for he was his heir, being the next-of-kin. When I came he told me that his deceased uncle's books were marvelously well kept, but that he found marked therein that he held money for one "Catherine Tresize," who, however, had not come forward to claim anything. Why didst thou not go and inquire about thy money?'

Catherine replied that, not being in immediate want, she had not thought of doing so; and she supposed that Master Andrew's nephew would take good care of it.

The old man shook his head, and said that was a bad way of managing her affairs; 'but fortunately thou hast to deal with honest people,' he added: 'so thou hast lost nothing.'

The woodman's wife now came out, and begged the visitor to enter, which he did; and having seated himself, he asked the young girl if she remembered the offer he had made her three years previous of taking her to London, and whether she was now disposed to accept it for herself and Barbara.

Catherine remained silent for a few moments.

'Well said the good merchant, 'I will give thee until to-morrow to consider. And now I must wish you all farewell; I shall come here early to-morrow.'

The young girl slept little that night, her mind was too preoccupied to allow of rest; she felt that her own future and that of Barbara depended on the choice she was about to make. She

prayed long and earnestly; by morning the agitation which attends the presence of conflicting thoughts and ideas had given place to the calm which follows a decision taken from right and disinterested motives.

When the merchant returned, she thanked him for his kindness, and said that she and Barbara would be ready to accompany him whenever he wished.

CHAPTER XVIII.

DURING their residence at Exeter Catherine and her little sister, as Barbara was called, had become very generally known; and even to those who had never spoken to them, the young girl's happy face, and that of the beautiful child who so frequently accompanied her, had become familiar.

It was not without surprise that it was now learnt that the two were about to leave Exeter for London. And there was no little sorrow in the heart of many a poor person that, in some way or other, had experienced the kindness either of the good widow who was dead or of Catherine herself. During the last days spent at the woodman's cottage these grateful friends came flocking in to bid farewell to one who had won their hearts, and amongst them was to be seen the son of the woodman, with his wife, who were not easy because they had not been able to repay the whole of the money that had been lent to them. Catherine, on her part, begged them not to trouble themselves, assuring them that what would please her most would be that they should consider the money their own.

'I know that you will make a good use of it,' she said gracefully; 'and so, though I shall be here no longer, there will be something of mine doing a little good. You see, then, that by accepting it you would be rendering me a service.'

A journey such as she was about to take could not be thought of without awakening some apprehension, being not only long and arduous, but really beset with difficulties, and even dangers. And a tinge of sorrow would come over her when the idea presented itself that she was to leave, perhaps for ever, places associated with so much that was dear to her. But, amidst regrets and fears, she remained calm, for she knew that what she wished, and what she had prayed for, was, that she might do God's will; and it was for the sake of Barbara, and not for her own happiness, that she had made her present choice.

The day of departure came. The travelers, and several of their friends who had collected to bid them farewell, met at the house formerly inhabited by Master Andrew. The London merchant, whose business had been to purchase woolen goods, had with him several pack-horses, well laden, led and attended by four servants, all well armed.

Behind one of these servants Catherine was seated on a pillion, the usual mode of traveling for females at that period; and the merchant himself took upon him the particular charge of little Barbara.

At a slow pace they proceeded down the street, Catherine taking a last eager look at the old houses as she passed along; here and there, attracted by the horses' hoofs, some one with whose face she was familiar would look out and gaze at her with surprise. They passed the cottage where she had lived with Widow O'Reilly. It was now uninhabited; the flowers in the little garden, which Barbara had tended with such care, were growing in wild neglect; the autumn leaves were strewn on the paths; the dead flower-stalks, which the little gardener had been wont to cut down each season, now reared, unmolested, their withered and ghastly forms; for death had touched those 'transient stars of the earth,' and death, thought Catherine as she saw them, had likewise struck one in that house whose friendship and maternal care had rendered her presence as dear as her loss was painful. And the words of the Psalmist came into her mind; 'Man's days are as grass; as the flower of the field, so shall he flourish.'

So occupied was Catherine with the remembrance of the happy

days spent with Bridget, from the hour when first she met the old Irishwoman on Gulval Cairn to the sad moment when death severed those sweet ties, that for some time she gave no attention to the country through which they were passing; and when at length she looked around her, every familiar object had disappeared. Roused from her reverie, she began to watch with interest the varying landscape as they traveled slowly on; occasionally the old merchant riding by her side, and entering into conversation, and giving her the opportunity of exchanging a few words with Barbara. Towards noon they all stopped to rest.

Late that evening the party reached a wayside inn of the poorest description, where their unexpected arrival caused much commotion. All was noise and confusion in the little courtyard; the host searching accommodation for the men and horses; his wife no less busy in the kitchen, which was also the guests' room, preparing a meal for the hungry travelers.

'I trust, good dame,' said the merchant, 'that there is some what better fare in the larder than when I passed here three months ago.'

'In truth, sir, so few travelers come this way, that to lay in great provisions on small hopes would be to incur loss, and that no one likes.'

'Come, come, there must be something in the house, and we must have it; for, if all are as hungry as I am, I promise we shall do good justice to the supper.'

The good woman grumbled while she continued chopping up vegetables to make soup for the guests.

'Why, after all,' she remarked, 'we don't hang out a sign to attract folks in; so those who come must put up with what they get.'

'There is a goose in the larder, wife; why don't you give that to the party?' said the master of the inn, who had just entered the kitchen.

'Goose!' exclaimed the merchant; 'why, that is my favorite dish. Let us have it, by all means.'

'Well, you are provoking, James,' said the woman to her husband. 'That goose was kept for Master Pymly, who sent word he would pass this way in a couple of days.'

The husband insisted that the present guests should be fed, even at the expense of those who were to follow; and the dame, rather unwillingly, consented to roast the goose. The travelers rested well that night, and early the following morning continued their road. Slowly but prosperously they journeyed on; occasionally a wayfarer, glad to avail himself of the protection afforded by the merchant's party, joining the little band, and accompanying it as far as his business or pleasure brought him. Each day new scenery presented itself to their view, and in spite of the fatigue attendant on so long a journey over bad roads though these improved as they approached nearer London, Catherine found much enjoyment in a mode of life which was quite novel to her.

After several days' journey they reached the county of Hampshire, when their road lay through the New Forest. In silent admiration, Catherine gazed on those giant oaks, monarchs of the forest, that spread their mighty arms across the path, as her eye wandered among the endless crowd of trees, now in their full autumnal beauty. She was delighted, too, with the sight of the timid deer, that would appear, first, in the distance, browsing at their ease; then, as the travelers approached, raising their heads and throwing back their graceful necks, they would suddenly dart off. All this was very pleasant to the two young travelers. They thought it the most pleasant day they had spent since they had left Exeter, and the good merchant enjoyed their cheerful talk and the sight of their happy countenances.

So the hours passed rapidly, and evening drew on. The gloom thickened under the spreading foliage, now merged in one dark mass. Soon it was noticeable that something was amiss. Master Alwin gave plain signs of uneasiness. He was seen in earnest talk with his men. At length, riding close to Catherine, he said:

'We have lost our way, and I fear we must travel all night.'

But be not afraid, my good maiden; see, the little one is asleep.' As he said this he pointed to Barbara, round whom he had stretched a protecting arm.

'Keep close together,' he added, addressing his men, 'and see that your arms are ready for handling.'

After a few minutes' conversation the party agreed on taking a road which branched off from the one they had hitherto followed. Their progress was necessarily slow, for the way was dark and the horses tired.

Catherine begged her kind old friend not to be uneasy on her account, assuring him that she was not afraid. She trusted herself to God's protection and occupied herself in prayer. Sometimes the strange noises heard in the forest at night would draw her attention, and she listened with wonder or even awe. More than once she was startled by what seemed to her like measured footsteps treading alone the path; again, there was a rattling sound as if bullets were falling among the leaves, though it was but the dropping of the acorns with which the oaks were laden. At times a branch would fall, and the birds, disturbed in their rest, would utter piercing cries. But a sound different from any that she had yet heard made Catherine suddenly turn her head. A light was seen to gleam in the thicket. The man behind whom she was sitting instinctively grasped his fire-arms.

'What is that?' he muttered, addressing one of his companions, and pointing towards the underwood; but the light had vanished, and his companion, who saw nothing, only laughed at his alarm.

'But did *you* see nothing, Mistress Catherine?' said the man, appealing to the young girl.

'Yes, I saw a light in yonder bush, and heard what seemed the voice of a person speaking in a whisper. It was the sound that made me turn my head.'

'There,' rejoined the first speaker, turning to his unbelieving companion; 'I knew that I was not mistaken.'

'What's all this talking about?' cried the merchant, interposing.

Before a reply could be given a man had leaped from the thicket, and firmly grasping the bridle of the foremost horse, which was mounted by Master Alwin, he bade the party stop. The tired and frightened steed halted at once.

'What wantest thou?' exclaimed the rider, fumbling for his fire-arms.

'Your goods or your life!' was the fierce answer.

A shot from one of the men, who had ridden quickly to his master's side, hit the extended arm of the robber, from whose hand a pistol dropped, and with a wild shout he fled into the woods; but in a second three more highwaymen rushed upon the travelers.

'Fire at them, my men!' shouted the old merchant.

The order was promptly obeyed, and the assailants, not expecting so warm a reception from a party of peaceful merchants who had evidently lost their way, in the forest, retired from the attack.

The travelers hurried on as fast as their tired horses would permit. On, through the seemingly never-ending woods they rode all that night. They were silent, except when from time to time good Master Alwin said a few cheering words to Catherine, or the latter whispered, 'Barbara dear, do not be afraid, I am near you,' when the terrified child looked round to ascertain where she was.

At length the dawn appeared. With what joy did Catherine hail it! With intense pleasure she watched the rosy sky towards the east; all fears vanishing with the shades of night.

The weary wayfarers halted at the first habitation they came to, and there rested themselves for the day and the following night, when the merchant, having largely remunerated his host for this hospitality, they continued their journey.

But these fatigues and dangers came to an end, and London was at last in sight. Master Alwin was highly pleased; he thought of his good dame, his old shop, his faithful dog, his accustomed haunts in the city, all crowded into his mind, and, after his long absence, he was impatient again to behold them. Catherine

was thankful for the protection Providence had vouchsafed to them; and little Barbara looked about in silent wonderment.

It was four o'clock in the afternoon when the party wound their way through the narrow streets of old London. Very different was the aspect of the city in those days from that which it now bears. Even the best shops had much the appearance of booths at a country fair; the goods were exposed for sale in the open fronts, and the sturdy apprentices, who stood at the door, up and down outside, watching that nothing was stolen, cried at the pitch of their voices, to the passers by, 'What do you lack? What do you lack?' adding a list of the articles which their master sold.

'This is a larger town than Exeter, is it not, Mistress Catherine?' said the merchant.

'Yes, indeed, it seems so,' replied the young girl.

Barbara looked up into the old man's face, and asked, with her usual gravity, 'But are there fields and woods like those where sister and I used to roam near Exeter?'

'Fields and woods,' murmured Master Alwin. 'Well, no, not near enough for you to run in and out directly from the door.'

Then, noticing the shade of sadness that passed over the little face, he added, 'But in the fine weather we can on holidays take a walk, though it is a long walk from the city to the fields, and see the cows milked, and have good curds-and-whey. And then in the parlor at the rear of the shop my dame has two pots with plants in them, which a friend brought her from his garden, and the goldsmith opposite has a bird in a cage that sings all day long; so you will feel just as if you were in the country.'

Rather a poor substitute for the wild flowers, the green lanes, the woodland paths of Devonshire, thought the child, but she said no more; and on they journeyed at a very slow pace, until they finally halted before a shop whose exterior was by no means showy, but which exhibited in its narrow frontage some large rolls of woollen goods.

'Here we are!' exclaimed Master Alwin, as he handed little Barbara to the apprentice who stood at the door.

From a back parlor emerged the dame; while she was greeting her husband and making various inquiries about the journey, Catherine, who had dismounted, and now still holding Barbara by the hand, examined with no small interest the appearance of one with whom she would have henceforward to dwell.

Dame Cicely, although past middle age, was an active rosy-cheeked old lady; she was of small stature, very neat in her dress—indeed, her white cap and large frill, her short red petticoat, with its narrow silver edging, and her bright-colored apron, looked as if they never *could* be untidy.

Catherine's eyes had wandered from the cheerful face down to the polished shoes with silver buckles, when the dame looked round at her.

'Is this the Devonshire lassy of whom you spoke when you returned from your last journey? I am right glad she has come this time,' she said, addressing her husband: and having received an affirmative answer from him, she welcomed Catherine to her new home.

'Truly,' remarked Master Alwin, 'the pleasure of seeing thee, good dame, and my old shop, had made me for a moment forget these two young ones. That is Catherine Tresize, and this child is—well, hers is a long history, and Mistress Catherine will tell it to you better than I can; so now let us have something to eat.'

CHAPTER XIX.

LONDON was a picturesque old city at the period when Catherine went to reside there. Very different both in size and appearance from the gigantic accumulation of brick and mortar which now bears that name; as different perhaps as the Lin-din of the ancient Britons from the London of the sixteenth century.

Had the young girl been obliged to live in one of the crowded thoroughfares of modern London, to breathe its atmosphere of fog

and smoke, and listen to its incessant noise and turmoil, she would have felt even more acutely than she did the change from country to town life. The gabled houses, with high pointed roofs and latticed windows, and the narrow street, had none of the dull uniform appearance of town buildings of the present day. Beautiful spires were to be seen high above the roof-tops, seeming to dart towards heaven, fit emblems of the ardent faith of the middle ages which had called them into existence. Catherine admired the city, which surpassed all she had ever imagined of its size and magnificence; nevertheless she, whose childhood and early youth had been passed amid the pleasant scenery of Devon and the wild landscapes of the Cornish coast, could not be insensible to the loss of those beauties of nature which had always delighted her young heart; nor could she but miss the joys and freedom of country life. Yet she was of too kind and grateful a disposition to allow her good friends to see, more than she could help, that *anything* was painful to her in her new mode of life. And soon her cheerful happy spirit found enjoyment in the busy occupation of Master Alwin's establishment.

Sometimes when alone with Barbara, she and the child would talk, with a pleasure not unmingled with regret, of the sunny meadows and shady woodland paths they had left, and of the wild flowers they loved to gather; and as their thoughts wandered back to those times, the memory of the dear friends who then smiled upon them, and whose presence had shed gladness around them, came floating back, surrounded by that mellow light with which time hallows recollections of the past.

The room in which Catherine and Barbara usually sat at work (sometimes alone, sometimes with Dame Cicely) was up-stairs, and served as a store-room; the panelled walls were dark with age, the low ceiling was crossed by large beams, and as the windows were small, and in deep recesses, the chamber had that peculiar and unpleasant gloom which characterized buildings of that period. The light penetrated cautiously, it might seem, into the room, and though a bright gleam might fall on some of the well-polished pieces of furniture that stood nearest the window, all else lay obscure in shade. There were numerous cupboards on all sides, and Dame Cicely had shown the contents of them to her young friends; one contained the house linen; in another clothes that might be of use to the poor were carefully put by; a third held the store of groceries necessary for the family; each press being arranged with the greatest neatness and order.

Catherine and Barbara thought they had seen everything in the room, when one day the latter, who was searching for a ball of wool which had rolled along the floor, discovered that one of the panels in the recess of the window had in it a small key-hole.

'Is there a cupboard *there* also?' inquired the child, addressing Dame Cicely.

The old lady replied in the affirmative, adding that it was quite full, but of what she did not say; and often after that day Barbara would look at the panel, wondering why a cupboard had been made in that place, for it must, she thought, be very small.

Three weeks had elapsed since the return of the merchant to his shop. It was Sunday, and a very wet day; the family and household and a few Catholic neighbors had joined together in prayer, it being, as was then mostly the case, impossible for them to assist at Mass. The devotions were terminated, and Catherine and Barbara remained alone in that room which has been already described; the former was turning over the leaves of her old Missal when Dame Cicely re-entered.

'That is a handsome book,' she said, taking it into her hand. 'Canst thou read it without difficulty?'

'Yes,' replied the young girl; 'mother taught me to read, and write also, when I was quite a child.'

'And art thou fond of reading?'

'O, very fond. Dear mother had a few books, which I have read over many times. When I used to go to see good Dame Andrew, I sometimes looked into her books; but she had not many.'

'Over-much reading is bad, Catherine,' said the old dame. 'I never read aught else but my prayer-book, and am none the worse for that; many good folks do not even know their letters. But since you seem fond of learning, methinks it is no harm to make use of the talents God has given you, and so I should not mind lending you a book just to read on holidays, or in the long winter evenings.'

As Dame Cicely said this, she took the large bunch of keys which hung from her waistband, and, separating a small one from the rest, proceeded towards the little cupboard, which she unlocked. Barbara drew near, delighted to have a view of the interior.

The panel opened from the ground to about the height of a man's head; the depth inside did not exceed six inches, and the few narrow shelves only held some old rubbish. Barbara and Catherine looked at each other with surprise; there were certainly no books there, nor anything else of value. But the dame touched a spring, and what had seemed to be the end of the cupboard opened back, displaying to view a space large enough to admit a person; there were shelves all round. 'Here,' said Dame Cicely, 'we keep the vestments, and all that is necessary for the offering of the holy sacrifice of the Mass; and there, too, the priest had to hide once when our house was searched. The pursuivants opened the front cupboard, but they did not find this out, Thank God!'

'Catherine, take this book,' she added, handing her an old volume which she had chosen from among a few others that lay on the ground in a corner.

The young girl seized it with joy, and read with some difficulty the half-effaced title, which announced that the contents was the Legend of St. Bega, Virgin and Abesse, printed from the manuscript of a monk, who wrote some centuries after the death of the holy nun. It was one of those early specimens of printing known as block-books, the impression being taken from letters cut out in a block of wood, which caused them to be of a somewhat clumsy form.

'My granduncle was a printer and engraver,' said Dame Cicely, 'and when I was a girl my mother used to take me to see him. He liked me very much, and being fond of old books himself, he one day gave me this one, which *he* prized; but for my part, I never cared to read, and preferred my spinning-wheel to a book any day; so it has been lying-by these forty years and more.'

Catherine thanked her kind friend, and seating herself on one of the high-backed chairs near the window, she began to read.

How little do most of us think, when we hand a book to a young person, that the whole future of that soul may perhaps be influenced by what it there reads!

Catherine was just at that age when the mind and heart are most impressionable, and the feelings are stronger than the judgment. She was seventeen, and a feeling hitherto unknown to her had of late passed over that blithesome nature; it made her thoughtful, but not sad: it occupied her interiorly; but none of her daily duties were on that account neglected.

What that feeling was, from whence it proceeded, or to what it tended, she could not clearly ascertain. It was not discontent with her present situation, and yet it made her heart yearn for something more perfect; as long, however, as she had Barbara to educate, she was fully satisfied to devote all her time and energies to that object; but when the great work should be fulfilled, what course of life should she follow? Although she justly esteemed those who led really good lives in the world, she felt called to something higher. She knew not what, but she prayed each day that God's will might be made manifest to her, and she continued cheerfully to perform the duties of her station, waiting with childlike confidence until her Heavenly Father should point out the road He wished her to follow.

Such, then, was the disposition of Catherine's mind when Dame Cicely unburied from her mysterious press the long-forgotten book, and bestowed it on her young friend. The rain continued to fall in torrents, and the girl remained by the window reading. She followed with interest the life of the saintly Irish princess.

The quaint language of the Saxon monk, and the clumsy form

of the old letters, prevented her from proceeding very rapidly, but this by no means abated her ardor; indeed, her attention was so fixed on the book, that, had not little Barbara reminded her of the hour, the mid-day meal would have been unheeded.

During the week Catherine found little time to devote to reading; now and then a few spare moments were spent by her in deciphering a page of the old volume; but when Sunday came round again she was able to sit down quietly and enjoy her treasure. With what delight she heard the good monk's description of the large monastery which St. Bega erected at Hartlepool, Heorthen, or Hertesie, as the peninsula was called of old. How her young soul relished the account of the fervent keeping of fasts and watching; of the chanting of hymns and psalms, and the study of holy books, to all of which its pious inmates devoted themselves! A life free from those distracting cares which must engross the attention of Christians engaged in the world; a life wholly consecrated to the service of God, and for His sake to the wants, both spiritual and temporal, of His suffering children—such was the beautiful vision which the history of St. Bega and her nuns placed before Catherine. If only that life could be one day hers, thought she; but then she feared it was temerity in one subject to numerous imperfections to aspire to so high a state. And then, where could she now find a convent in England? Those peaceful abodes, where sanctity and learning had so long flourished, were destroyed; she remembered her mother telling her how their holy inmates had been ruthlessly driven from their secluded homes, and the precious altar furniture, and even the money destined for the poor, carried off by profane hands. There seemed therefore, humanly speaking, no possibility of her ever following a conventual life; but Catherine knew that God has merciful designs on all souls, and that He will guide those that confide in Him, whatever be their lot in this world; she therefore remained in peace.

One evening, when Master Alwin returned home after a visit to a country friend, he called Catherine, who was as usual busily employed up-stairs; so, taking with her some knitting she was doing, she ran down.

Master Alwin had seated himself in his old armchair, and was entertaining his wife with an account of all he had seen and heard during his short absence.

'Ah, Catherine,' said he, when the young girl entered the room, 'I have news for thee. I have seen the priest of whom thou hast so often spoken to us; he was at my friend's house. He told me that he had escaped from the Tower some two years ago, and that he had been living afore that in Cornwall; so I thought to myself, This must be Father Ralph; and having asked him if he knew any one named Catherine Tresize, he said he remembered thee well, and he was much pleased to hear of thee, and to know that the little Lady Barbara was safe. Next time he comes to town he will stop at my house, and thou wilt see him.'

Catherine was overjoyed at this news; but old Master Alwin had more to say, and he did not feel quite sure what effect it would have on his young friend. He hesitated, sighed, and then inquired how Barbara was. A merry laugh from the child herself made him raise his eyes from the ground, on which he had kept them fixed for the last few minutes, there she sat beside Catherine. 'Ah,' thought the old merchant, 'how will *they*, who are so united, ever bear to be separated?' Such, indeed, was the nature of the news he was so loth to impart. Catherine loved her little sister, as she called Barbara, with an affection so deep and true, that Master Alwin, who was a kind-hearted man, did not like to tell her that Father Ralph had said that he knew a Catholic family who were going to France, and would doubtless be willing to take Lady Margaret's daughter to her father, who was living in Normandy.

After deferring the evil moment as long as he could, the merchant repeated to the young girl the words of the priest. As he spoke, she ceased working, and listened motionless with interest and surprise. Her expressive countenance betrayed the feelings of her heart, where joy and sorrow strove for the mastery. Joy, because to find Barbara's father or brother was her most earnest

wish; for the welfare of her little charge was dearer to her than her own. Sorrow, deep sorrow, at the prospect of losing the child who, during three years, had been the constant object of her solicitude and love.

When Master Alwin had finished speaking there was a moment's silence, which none seemed inclined to interrupt; then a little hand clasped Catherine's firmly.

'I will not leave thee, sister,' whispered Barbara.

Tears, which she vainly tried to restrain, now flowed down the young girl's face.

'Ah, tis a sad thing, truly, for thee to part with the little one,' said Dame Cicely, who had hitherto sat spinning in silence.

'But maybe there will be no means of sending her after all.'

'O, I do not wish that!' exclaimed Catherine. 'Far from me the desire to keep Lady Margaret's daughter from her parent; that would be ill complying with her dear ladyship's dying wishes, and refusing the favor I have daily asked of God for my darling. I and good Widow O'Reilly promised to take care of the little child until we could restore her to her father or brother, if either escaped. The moment has come to fulfill this part of the promise; and, although I do weep at the idea of losing my little sister,'—as she spoke she drew Barbara closer to her—'yet I am glad that the last injunctions of her departed mother will be obeyed, and that she will be once more with her family, and in that position of life in which she was born.'

Master Alwin and his wife expressed their satisfaction at Catherine's sentiments, and said that *her* view of the case certainly was the right one.

All anxiously awaited the visit of Father Ralph, who was to explain his plans for Barbara's journey and to announce the time of her departure.

The poor child herself was inconsolable. Father, brother, home, and riches, nothing of all this could reconcile her to leaving her dear Catherine, and when Dame Cicely tried to comfort her by mentioning some of these inducements, she would shake her head sorrowfully, and say, 'I do not remember my father nor my brother, but I love Kate better than any one in this world. I am quite happy with her; I do not want to be rich.'

Catherine understood Barbara's grief, for she felt it herself, and could therefore console her better than Dame Cicely, in spite of the good woman's excellent intentions.

She told her, with that effectuate manner which lent force to her simple words, that it was the will of God that she should return to her family, to make her father happy by her presence and good conduct. The child listened with docility, and often the two mingled their tears together.

CHAPTER XX.

FROM the quiet sphere in which Catherine moved we must now divert the attention of the reader to the stirring events which occupied the closing years of Elizabeth's reign; for they affected the fortunes of Barbara's relatives and, indirectly, those of the child herself, as well as of her young guardian.

Sir Cuthbert de Courcy had, after the destruction of his manor, returned to London. It will be remembered that he had promised to obtain, if possible, some succors from the Queen for the inhabitants of Penzance. On his arrival in the capitol he accordingly petitioned in their favor; but received from his sovereign the answer, that if he and the men of Penzance had fought, as it became brave and loyal subjects to do, instead of abandoning the town, they would not now be destitute, and that, having acted otherwise, they need expect no aid from her. To the loss of his manor, which, as he had represented, had been caused by his anxiety to save the town, her Majesty did not even allude.

Cuthbert was much aggravated by this answer, in which, far from giving him credit for his endeavors to stimulate the townspeople, the Queen had included him among the number of those who had fled.

When, a short time after this, the Earl of Essex, abandoning the privacy in which he had lived since his trial, threw open the doors of Essex-house to every comer, and summoning his former dependents from the country gave admittance to every bold adventurer, Cuthbert was one of those who hastened thither. His friendship for one of the partisans of the Earl had first induced him to join their assemblies; but he soon became an ardent adherent to their cause. Lord Essex had determined to regain his lost favor with the Queen, for which purpose he left no resource untried. A trusty messenger had carried to the King of Scotland the assurance of the Earl's attachment, informing him at the same time that Cecil, Raleigh, the Earl of Nottingham, and Cobham, the faction that ruled at court, were leagued to place the Spanish Infanta on the throne at the death of the Queen. Late one Saturday evening Cuthbert returned from Drury-house, the residence of the Earl of Southampton, where the conspirators were now accustomed to hold their meetings. To Adelina's anxious inquiries as to the probable success of their plans, he replied that he entertained no doubt as to their favorable result. 'But,' he added, 'we need to be expeditious, and I fear much time is wasted in idle discussion.'

'Then no decision has been come to yet?' said Lady Adelina.

'Nothing final has been determined on replied her husband; 'but this day my Lord Essex devised a plan which I hold to be the best yet thought of, and which, were I in his place, I would at once carry into effect. This is it: that we should proceed in a body to the palace, and take possession of the gate and principal apartments; that then my Lord Essex, with those noblemen most devoted to his cause, should present themselves before the Queen, and throwing themselves on their knees, should refuse to rise until she had granted his petition, and had agreed to banish from court his enemies, and this demand, surrounded as she would be, she would not dare to refuse. I wish the Earl would not tarry so long in the execution of his projects. But then he waits, 'tis true, an answer from the King of Scots.' Cuthbert ceased speaking, and his head resting on his hand, he remained buried in thought. Adelina was accustomed to see him of late indulge in long fits of musing and as at such times he did not like to be disturbed, she quietly retired.

Ten o'clock. The watchman announced it in a loud voice and sung out his quaint ballad, saying:

'Good people all, hang out a light,
And see that the horn lamps are bright.'

Cuthbert rose, and paced to and fro with evident uneasiness. The various plans he had heard proposed during the last three weeks by the adherents of Essex occupied his mind, and, as he passed them in review, the expression of his countenance varied strangely; at one moment it portrayed anxiety and almost terror, as he considered the risk to the undertaking and the ill consequences of a failure; then again a smile of triumph played on his features, as thoughts of success reanimated his hopes. Involuntarily his mind reverted to the answer he had received from the Queen on his application in behalf of the inhabitants of Penzance; the vexation he had then experienced had contributed more than he was himself aware of to make him a willing partisan of any scheme which had for its object to oppose Elizabeth's tyrannical sway. Sympathy for the Earl of Essex, and friendship for some of those who had joined his cause, had doubtless influenced him in his decision to associate himself with them, but these latent reasons of which we have spoken were in reality a very strong stimulus. He had walked up and down the apartment several times, when suddenly he stopped, he heard knocking at the outer gate. Who was it that sought admittance at that late hour? Was in news from Essex's party? and if so, what tidings brought they? Or was the plot discovered, and were those who wished to enter emissaries of the Queen come in search of information, and maybe also to arrest the inmate? While these conflicting ideas held him in painful suspense, the knocking was repeated. The visitor gained admittance, he crossed the court yard ascended the stairs, and then a hand pushed aside the heavy arras hanging which guarded the entrance of the room, in the centre of which Cuthbert still stood uncertain.

The visitor was accompanied by one of the servants of the house, who, approaching his master, said:

'This person, sir, comes on urgent business; so methought it right, knowing you had not retired to rest, to conduct him to you at once.'

'You did well, and may leave the room now,' replied Cuthbert, who had recognized in the man alluded to a messenger from Essex house. 'What news?' he inquired anxiously, as soon as they were alone.

'My Lord Essex earnestly demands that all his friends should assemble at his house to-morrow morning as early as possible: he has received secret intelligence of an important nature, and wishes to communicate it to them. These are my orders, and I must needs go immediately, for I have the same message to take to many other houses ere daybreak.'

'I will attend there without fail,' replied Cuthbert.

The messenger departed, and Sir Cuthbert retired to seek that rest which he felt much in need of; but sleep is seldom the companion of an uneasy mind, and he rose early, after having passed a feverish and restless night. Taking with him a small escort he hastened to the rendezvous.

It was Sunday morning; all the shops were closed, the streets deserted, the usually noisy thoroughfares were silent, and the little party hurried on unseen and unmolested.

On reaching Essex-house they found a large number of the Earl's partisans already assembled in the spacious courtyard. In a few moments the nobleman himself appeared. Standing on the steps of his magnificent residence, he looked gravely at the crowd below, and, every eye fixed on him, amid a breathless silence he addressed his faithful adherents. Having first informed them that, on the previous evening, the Secretary Herbert had brought him an order to appear before the Council, to which he had answered that he was too unwell to leave his apartment he went on to say that, a short time after, a note from an unknown writer had been put into his hands warning him to provide without delay for his own safety. 'This, my noble friends,' continued the Earl, 'this is the reason why I have called you hither; a plot is laid against my life. I well know that so foul a design cannot fail to inspire hearts like yours with horror and indignation; and it is on *your* courage that I depend to defeat the intrigues of those who bear me malice. Mine enemies have, I am aware, poisoned the mind of *that* sovereign who heretofore regarded me with so great favor. Fortune, that formerly smiled upon my every undertaking, seems of late to have abandoned me; my intentions have been misinterpreted; I have been arraigned before an unconstitutional tribunal, composed of men who were either my personal enemies or my political rivals; my petitions to the Queen have remained unnoticed; but this very day do I purpose to recover my former greatness. Accompany me, my friends; I will proceed to the Queen; I will solicit *her* protection against the malice of mine enemies.'

'At ten in the forenoon the lord mayor, aldermen, and companies will, you know, assemble at St. Paul's cross, as is usual on Sundays; at the conclusion of the sermon we will join them, and call on them to follow us to the palace. Does my undertaking seem to you too hazardous? Remember, that a few years ago, in a country not far from England, in circumstances not dissimilar to ours, the Duke of Guise, with the aid of the people of Paris, was successful. Are those who now surround me less brave than those whom he led? Am I less popular with the people of London than he was with the inhabitants of Paris? I trust not; but you, valiant gentlemen, shall decide my fate. Answer me, are you willing to follow me? Are you ready to risk your lives in a good cause?'

Shouts of assent, and the manifest enthusiasm which his words had kindled in his adherents, assured Essex that he had not spoken in vain. It still wanted some time to ten, the hour they purposed starting for St. Paul's cross. The interval was spent in preparations, which, however, were suddenly interrupted by an unexpected arrival. An attendant, in whose countenance alarm was visible, brought to his master the unwelcome intelligence that Egerton, the Lord Keeper, the Earl of Worcester.

Knollys, the Comptroller of the Household, and the Lord Chief Justice stood at the gate and were demanding admission.

'Let them enter,' said Essex coolly; 'but see that their attendants, the purse-bearer excepted, remain outside.'

'What may be the cause of this tumult?' inquired Egerton, looking round as the crowd collected, in the court.

The Earl of Essex stepped forward, and boldly addressing the speaker, replied

'A plot is laid against my life; letters had been counterfeited in my name, and assassins have even been appointed to murder me in my bed. We have met, therefore, to defend our lives, and surely in doing so we are fully justified since mine enemies cannot be satisfied unless they suck my blood.'

'If such be really the case,' interrupted Popham, 'let it be proved; we will then relate it fairly, and the Queen will do impartial justice.'

'Impartial justice!' impatiently exclaimed the Earl of Southampton, who was standing near Essex. 'What trust can we place in the commands of her Majesty, when they are ineffectual to restrain those on whom she imposes them? Did not Lord Grey, notwithstanding that the Queen had enjoined on him to keep the peace towards me, did he not, with many of his followers, attack me on the Strand as I went on horseback, accompanied by one footboy only, who lost his hand in defending me? After that you come to talk to us of impartial justice!'

'You have nothing to complain of,' replied the first speaker. 'If her Majesty's commands have been violated it has not been with impunity; the guilty party now suffers imprisonment for the offence.'

Egerton, who had listened to this debate with evident impatience, now turned abruptly to Lord Essex and asked him if he would explain his grievances in private; but before that nobleman had time to reply, several voices exclaimed: 'They wish to entrap you; you only lose your time in thus discussing with them.'

Essex appearing undecided what course to adopt, the cries became more urgent. It was in vain that Egerton, in the Queen's name, demanded that every man should lay down his arms. The Earl then looked towards his friends, as if to assure them that what he was about to do would not compromise his cause or theirs and, without saying a word, turned and entered the house. The lords were about to follow, when the sinister cries of 'Kill them! kill them! Keep them as pledges!' which broke forth from the assembly, made them hesitate on the threshold. But there are moments when, fear being useless and danger unavoidable, men must of necessity affect indifference, even if they do not feel it. Inside or outside the mansion their lives were equally in peril; they therefore continued to follow Essex. He conducted them up-stairs, then through two rooms guarded by musketeers, and at length introduced them into a back chamber, where, having desired them to have patience for half an hour or so, he was preparing to leave them, when Egerton, seeing him move towards the door, detained him, expostulating with some eagerness.

'My lord, we came hither to obey her Majesty's commands; our time is therefore not our own, and cannot be thus wasted. I thought that you were going to explain to us your grievances, that we might lay them fairly before the Queen; but if such is not your intention, let us depart immediately.'

Essex smiled at the impotent anger of those who were now in truth his captives.

'You wish to know my grievances,' he said; 'well, in a few hours all London shall be acquainted with them, and I shall have laid them myself before the Queen.'

He departed, closing the door carefully, and those inside heard the unwelcome sound of bolts being fastened, and listened with no pleasant feelings to the order which he gave to the musketeers to guard the prisoners and to allow none to have access to them.

The Earl, on this, returned to the court, and announced to his friends what he had done, and then drawing his sword he rushed into the street, followed by the Earls of Rutland and Southampton, and the Lords Sandys and Mounteagle, with about

eighty knights and gentlemen, foremost among whom was Sir Cuthbert de Courcy, who hoped at length to gain for himself the renown which his ambition had always coveted.

The guard at Ludgate, perhaps thinking them too formidable to be resisted with safety, let them pass; and now they proceeded towards St. Paul's-cross, Lord Essex shouting. 'For the Queen, my mistress!' But the streets were as deserted as when Cuthbert had passed along them at early morn. The voice of Essex resounded through them, but no friendly voice reechoed the cry. The Earl of Bedford and Lord Cromwell, with about two hundred others, indeed joined the party; but not one of the citizens came to swell their ranks, and without their support success seemed but doubtful. Essex was evidently deeply mortified to see that the popularity on which he had so much counted in the city had failed to bring to his aid even a handful of fresh adherents. Still they continued to advance towards St. Paul's but on reaching it they found, to their dismay, that there was no meeting.

Consternation was visible in every countenance: those who were nearest their leader looked at him as if to inquire what was now to be done. 'Let us proceed to the residence of Smith; he is my friend, and maybe can aid us,' said Essex sadly.

Smith was one of the sheriffs, and to his house the Earl and his party now directed their course. They gained admittance, but the sheriff had prudently withdrawn, and his servant feigned to be ignorant as to his movements.

'Have all my plans failed, then?' exclaimed Essex, throwing himself exhausted into a chair. His friends pressed round him, seeking to rouse his hopes; but before he could resolve what to do he felt the need of quiet and reflection, and for that purpose retired to one of the apartments. Many of his followers, now seeing the hopelessness of the undertaking, returned to their homes; Sir Cuthbert was determined to remain to the last.

During these occurrences Adelina passed her time in a state of painful uncertainty. About two in the afternoon she heard that Lord Burghley and others had entered the city by different quarters and proclaimed Essex a traitor, offering a large reward for his arrest, still she was unwilling to believe that the plot had completely failed; hope lingered in her heart.

The hours seemed interminable, but evening came at last, and at dusk she saw the party returning who had left the house in the morning. But there was no figure among them that resembled Cuthbert; she thought, or rather hoped, that it was owing to the gathering darkness that she could not discern him. The men entered, and one of them proceeded up-stairs to acquaint his mistress with what had happened.

After relating the events already described, he added that the diminished followers of Lord Essex had returned by water to that unfortunate nobleman's house, where, after a slight resistance, the chiefs of the insurrection had yielded themselves prisoners.

'And my lord Cuthbert, where is he?' inquired Adelina, who had listened with painful interest to the account.

'My lady, he too was made prisoner; I was close to him, and he bid me tell you to destroy all papers concerning this affair, as the house might be searched.'

Lady Adelina passed a sleepless night. She ardently desired to do whatever might contribute to the safety of her husband, whose position, she was well aware, was a very precarious one; but she found herself powerless. To whom ought she to apply? Whom could she interest in the prisoner's favor? Whose support could she procure? These questions recurred every instant to her mind; she long sought in vain a solution to them.

At length she thought of two persons who might have it in their power to assist her. One was an intimate friend of Sir Cuthbert; to him she wrote acquainting him with what had happened, and asking his help and advice. The other was that same cousin through whose husband's influence the estates and title of Sir Reginald had been bestowed on his brother. Since that period a great coldness had taken place between the two families. Political differences estranged the gentlemen, and jealousy, on the part of Lady Somers, sowed division between

the cousins; but at that moment Adelina thought of nothing except how to save her husband, and as Lord Somers belonged to the court party, and possessed considerable influence in the Council, she resolved to go in person and solicit his wife's support. Feeling, nevertheless, uncertain as to the result of this visit, and not wishing that the friends of Sir Cuthbert should be aware that she sought for him protection from the court party, she determined not to acquaint her household with her intentions, and to go on foot, accompanied only by a waiting-woman on whom she could rely.

Early the following morning a barge might have been seen gliding rapidly up the Thames. The sunlight flashed on the oars at each stroke of the vigorous rowers; the smooth waters rippled round the keel, and a broad wake marked the passage of the boat, in which were two females simply attired. One of these appeared sorrowful and anxious; the other, who was evidently the maid, seemed little interested in whatever errand it might be that had brought her and her mistress out at so unusually early an hour.

The party had proceeded about half a mile up the river when they reached a landing-place, where the men pushed in the boat and all went on shore. The lady looked around her, as though uncertain which way to turn; on which the old attendant who had steered them up the current said, in an earnest but respectful tone:

'My lady, I pray you allow me and all others of your servants to accompany you. The streets are not safe; even armed men are oftentimes attacked in broad daylight. You, my lady, have never been alone or on foot through them, and know not the danger.'

'I have my maid,' replied Lady Adelina; 'and we are so simply dressed that we shall pass unobserved.'

The old man shook his head doubtfully; but, seeing that his mistress was determined, he insisted no longer. As he rowed away with his companions, he remarked, 'I marvel much what my lady's motives are, if she has any, for perchance it is only a fancy.'

Adelina and her companion, leaving the river-side, entered the narrow streets, the former walking at so rapid a pace that her maid found it difficult to keep by her side.

'What do you lack, madam?' cried the apprentices, as she passed their shops. One offered boots and shoes, another praised the excellence of his master's groceries, a third called attention to his watches, clocks, and mirrors. The noise confused Lady Adelina, and the quickness with which she had walked had fatigued her; so she stopped near a clothier's shop. At that moment a party of horsemen were seen advancing down the narrow streets; one of the horses were restive, and his rider had lost all control over him. The lady and her attendant grew alarmed, and were uncertain which way to turn, when the low door which guarded the entrance to the clothier's shop opened and a young girl politely prayed them to come within and wait until the horses had passed, of which offer they were happy to avail themselves. Adelina did not remark the look of surprise expressed in the maiden's countenance when first she saw the face of her whom she had invited in.

Dame Cicely was in the parlor at the end of the shop, a dark little den from which she and her husband would command a view of the goods and of those who passed in or out. In this place she begged Lady Adelina to enter, and seeing that she was very tired, asked her to remain and rest herself a while, to which she willingly agreed.

'Who were those horsemen?' she inquired; more for the sake of saying something than from any real desire to know.

'Some of the Queen's officers parading the city, methinks, to see if all is quiet after yesterday's disturbance,' replied the dame.

The mention of yesterday brought sad recollections to Lady Adelina; and the good woman, noticing that she changed color, turned to another subject of conversation.

'I fear I am interrupting you in your occupations,' observed

the visitor, after a few minutes' talk on in different topics. 'I shall go now.'

But Dame Cicely prayed her to remain until she felt quite rested, adding that Catherine would stay with her, while she herself went to the kitchen, where her presence at that moment was required.

The young girl, who since the entrance of Lady Adelina had kept at the other end of the room, now approached the party; and the lady, who had before scarcely observed her, looked at her attentively.

'What a calm happy face!' she thought.

'Are you never dull in this old shop?' she inquired.

'No, madam; we are all too busy,' replied Catherine smiling. 'The days pass quickly with us.'

'Ah, *you* have no sorrows,' rejoined the other. 'Time goes slowly for those who have.'

'I have had sorrows,' replied the girl; and for a moment her bright face became serious. 'I have watched by the death-bed of those that were dearest to me; but,' she added, with the happy look of one who felt the truth of what she said,—'we have a Heavenly Father to whom we can always have recourse; and the thought that it is His will that we should suffer brings consolation.'

Lady Adelina made no reply; and after the lapse of a few minutes, during which she seemed absorbed in thought, she rose, and thanking Catherine left the shop, and with her maid proceeded on their way. They now entered the more fashionable part of the city, and after a short walk they stopped before a large mansion.

Adelina did not give her name to the servant who opened the door, but bade him tell Lady Somers that she came on urgent business, and must see her at once. She was conducted into a handsome apartment; where, after waiting some time, she was joined by the mistress of the house.

'You come at an early hour, fair cousin. It is indeed long since you honored me with a visit.' There was in the tone and manner of the speaker, as she addressed these words to Adelina something haughty and ironical, which made the latter feel uncomfortable, as she replied rather hesitatingly:

'I should not have disturbed you at this hour had not urgent necessity obliged me to do so. I am in much affliction; surely, my cousin, you will not at such a moment consider the differences which have lately existed between us. Sir Cuthbert—'

'O, I understand; Sir Cuthbert wants a place, or a title, or a grant from the Queen, and it is to this I owe the honor of a visit,' interrupted the other.

The color rose in Adelina's cheek, and a tear stood in her eye; she felt that neither help nor consolation was to be expected from the unkind speaker; and she would gladly have departed at once without even disclosing the motive of her visit, had not the faint hope of interesting Lady Somers and her husband in Sir Cuthbert's favor retained her; so summoning all her courage she related the part De Courcy had taken in the late rebellion.

Her cousin listened with attention; but Adelina vainly sought from her a look of sympathy, for the handsome but cold features of the listener expressed none. When Sir Cuthbert's wife had finished speaking, and had told of his danger and her own distress, appealing to the kindness and generosity of her friend, and entreating her to obtain for the prisoner the protection of Lord Somers; when, in fine, she had exhausted all her energy in behalf of the cause she had so much at heart, her cousin replied in a few words, pronounced in a tone too decided to admit of any doubt as to their meaning. Sir Cuthbert, she said, had nothing to hope from them; she and her husband, belonging to the court party, could not favor rebels. He had joined Lord Essex, let him look for help to *his* friends. Without returning any answer, Adelina rose and proceeded towards the door; and a few minutes later she and her maid were on their way home. On reaching the bank of the river the barge was waiting, and conducted them rapidly to their dwelling.

As Lady Adelina entered the house a letter was placed in her hands.

'Who brought it?' she inquired eagerly.

'The servant of Mr. Elverton,' was the reply.

'That is good,' said the lady as she hurried upstairs.

No sooner was she alone in her chamber than she hastened to open the letter: as she read the paper dropped from her hand, while a look of deep sorrow passed over her face. With a sigh she seated herself in the deep embrasure of the window.

The note which had so excited her feelings and produced this despair came from the friend of Sir Cuthbert to whom she had written on the previous evening: his words, more polite perhaps than those of Lady Somers, were no less destructive of hope, and gave no promise at all of help. He declared that it would be dangerous for him even to express sympathy for any of those concerned in the late conspiracy. The Queen and her Ministers were alarmed, he said, and at such a moment they would not hesitate to arrest any person suspected of belonging to the party of Lord Essex; and consequently he felt himself obliged, though with deep regret, to beg Lady Adelina not to address herself any more to him: adding that he would notwithstanding continue to watch with interest the course of events in which the dictates of prudence forbade him to interfere.

No help from that side either! Such was the sad exclamation in which Lady Adelina added *her* testimony to that of so many afflicted, and declared with them that human friendships are vain in the hour of need. She had sought comfort from one united to her by the ties of kindred; in her she had found a cold indifference and a bitter irony. She had next applied to an intimate friend of him in whose favor she pleaded; but *he* feared for his own safety, and felt no inclination to risk it in behalf of his former companion. Yet Adelina well remembered hearing him since the commencement of the conspiracy, frequently assure Sir Cuthbert that he would always stand by him, happen what might.

The sun had set, but Adelina still remained at the open window. Her eye wandered over the garden, now in its full summer beauty, and rested on the river, where many a gaily-painted barge glided along; but the cheerful voices and merry laughter which proceeded from the parties who were thus enjoying the cool evening air seemed only sad music to the poor lady. For the soul invests with its own sentiments the sounds and objects which impress it; and so what to one speaks of joy, to another will frequently bring sorrow.

One face constantly appeared before Adelina's troubled vision, and its recollection seemed to soothe her; one voice sounded in her ear, and its tones were soft and sweet as those which fancy loves to impart to heavenly spirits. The words it repeated were grave yet consoling. 'We have a Heavenly Father,' it said, 'to whom we can always have recourse, and the thought that it is *His* will that we should suffer brings consolation.'

Yes, the calm happy look, the simple words, of Catherine brought more comfort to Lady Adelina than all the gay and powerful friends who, a few weeks ago pressed round her, but now prudently held aloof.

To seek consolation in God was an idea quite new to that poor afflicted soul. In days of prosperity she had seldom thought of Him; *never* as of a Father full of compassion for His erring children. The distance between the Almighty Creator of the universe and a weak creature seemed to her so great that she dared not implore *His* assistance. Could *her* sorrow touch His heart? Would He deign to listen to her prayers? She doubted it; but still the words of Catherine returned again and again to her mind. 'Surely,' thought she, 'that Heavenly Father of whom the young girl spoke with such confidence will not be deaf to my cries.'

In a moment of filial love inspired by Catherine's words, and her own urgent need of consolation and help, Adelina threw herself on her knees, and she prayed. What words she uttered she scarcely knew, but that they were heartfelt is certain. The gloom was fast gathering; the voices from the river had ceased; all was hushed in silence; but still she knelt motionless by the

open casement, the fresh night breeze playing gently with her golden hair, on which that day less time and art had been bestowed.

Yes, suffering is a wonderful purifier of the human heart, and often possesses greater power to detach it from earthly objects than the most eloquent sermons. The gay and thoughtless Adelina now experienced its influence.

CHAPTER XXI.

SHORTLY after the unsuccessful attempt of Lord Essex, and while the trial of that unfortunate nobleman and his accomplices almost exclusively occupied the public attention, Master Alwin received secret information that Father Ralph would say Mass at his house on the following Sunday.

It was then the middle of the week: the intervening days were to Catherine and Barbara days of solemn and anxious interest, for they dreaded that those hours were to be the last they were ever to spend together. But steady to her purpose, the young girl frequently reminded her little pupil of the good instructions she had received, and earnestly conjured her never to neglect them.

'Thy position will change, my little Barbara,' she said, 'but God's law does not change, and thou wilt find in thy new station duties to perform just as much as thou dost here.'

Saturday evening came, but no priest appeared. 'He will be here to-morrow,' said Master Alwin as he retired to bed, after waiting up an hour later than usual to receive his expected guest.

Sunday morning passed, as had the previous evening, without bringing any intelligence of Father Ralph. The merchant and his household concluded that some urgent need had called him elsewhere, or that he had not deemed it safe to come; but when a whole week had elapsed without their gaining any knowledge concerning him, they began to fear that he had been apprehended.

During this time Lady Adelina was plunged in a like painful uncertainty as to what would be the fate of her husband; access to him had been refused her.

She was one day musing on the events which then occupied most people's attention, and which had, for her in particular, so keen an interest, when her favorite waiting-woman entered the room.

'Bring your work here, Jane,' said Adelina, 'and sit with me, for truly I feel most sad and lonely when by myself. Hand me that embroidery; it might perchance divert my thoughts, if only I can fix them on it. But what is that piece of paper you hold in your hand?'

'It was about that I came, my lady. A man brought it here saying it was from Sir Cuthbert, and—'

'Give it to me!' exclaimed the poor lady, interrupting the speaker; and with trembling hands she hastened to unfold the paper, inside which was another piece, but nothing appeared to be written on either.

'What can this mean?' she said, appealing to her maid. 'Who brought it, say you?'

'A strange man, Thomas told me, who went off in a great hurry.'

Adelina remained silent, turning the paper round in her hand. Fortunately for her the waiting-woman had more quickness than her mistress, and suggested that the mysterious note might be secret writing. 'If you will it, my lady, I shall put it in water or hold it by the fire, and perchance something may appear thereon.'

It being summer there was no fire at hand, so the lady pronounced in favor of the trial by water. How anxiously she watched that scrap of paper as it floated in the bowl!

'There, I see something!' she exclaimed, as a few faint characters became visible on one of the papers. They were written

in lemon juice, and were, even after soaking in water, difficult to decipher; but after spending some time in the task and exercising much patience, Adelina in the end succeeded in reading the words on the smaller of the two pieces, which were as follows:

'I was arrested last week. The lady who will bring you this is the child's aunt. I pray you bid Catherine not to fear to let her take Barbara to her father in France. God's blessing be with you all!'

'RALPH.'

Lady Adelina was bewildered; what could this possibly mean? The writing and signature were not those of Sir Cuthbert.

'You have made a grievous mistake, Jane,' she said; 'this note cannot have been intended for me.'

'See the other paper, my lady,' replied the woman, handing it to her.

'Ah, that is his writing, indeed!' exclaimed Adelina; and she commenced reading the note, the perusal of which caused her no less astonishment than had the first.

Sir Cuthbert, after regretting the impossibility of seeing his wife, which forced him, he said, to commit to paper that which he would much prefer to communicate by words, told her that he had found a friend the intercourse with whom had, together with the lessons of adversity, changed many of his sentiments, and notably those which he had entertained towards his brother. 'I know,' he added, 'where his little daughter is, and I wish you to return her to her father; *he* is in France. Fear not to leave the city where I am, for your presence in it can avail me nothing, whereas this act of reparation will doubtless bring a blessing on my soul; neither let the length of the journey deter you, for God will be with you. Write when you have seen our niece.' To this epistle was added the address of Master Alwin, to whom Adelina was to give the paper which she had read first.

This was strange news indeed; the beautiful child which Lady Adelina had so desired to possess at Penzance was in London, and her aunt was at last to have her. How the thought of that child brought with it recollections of the past! The old Cornish Manor, the chapel with its stained windows and its carved angels, even the monotonous country life which she had found wearisome, appeared enviable when compared with the anxious and sorrowful existence she now led; she thought of Cuthbert's hunting-parties, and wished he were once more chasing the deer through the woods of Bron-Welli.

Turning from the quiet sadness of past recollection to the emergencies of her present situation, she felt puzzled how to act, and the idea of going to France quite alarmed her. She read over again Sir Cuthbert's letter. 'Ah, if *he* has found a friend in prison, that is more than *I* have found in the world. Would that I had some one whom I could consult!'

At that moment the words of Catherine sounded in her ear; 'We have a Heavenly Father to whom we can always have recourse.'

'She bade the waiting-woman leave the room, and then kneeling down she murmured half aloud a prayer to Him who abandons none that trust in His mercy. When she rose she felt comforted; she resolved to go immediately to see her niece at the address Cuthbert had given her.

When she stood before the entrance of Master Alwin's shop, she at once recognized the house where she had rested on the way to her cousin's.

'What do you lack?' cried the apprentice at the door.

Lady Adelina hesitated to enter; her courage failed her; the errand on which she came seemed such a strange one. At that moment Catherine stepped forward, and in that cheerful gracious manner which is so winning, she prayed the timid visitor to enter.

The young girl had quickly perceived, both on this and the former occasion, that the wife of Sir Cuthbert had gone through severe trials, and it was to those in affliction that her warm and generous heart felt drawn. At Penzance it had cost nature a struggle to view with charity Sir Cuthbert and Lady Adelina

de Courcy occupying the place of the rightful owners of the Manor; but now, when the poor lady stood before her with sorrow impressed on her young and once-laughing face, the past was all forgotten, and Catherine longed to soothe that afflicted heart.

'Enter, I pray thee, madam,' she repeated kindly.

'I desire to speak to one Master Alwin if he lives here,' said the lady in a low but earnest tone.

'What *do* you lack, ma'am?' cried the apprentice at the pitch of his voice. 'Cloth or woollen goods? White or dyed? High or low priced?'

'Hush!' said Catherine; 'the lady wants to speak to your master.' And turning to the visitor, she added, 'The dame is up-stairs, and Master Alwin will be in shortly; will you please to come up?'

Adelina followed her young guide to the room where Dame Cicely was working. The good woman received her very politely, wondering all the while what purpose had brought her.

'Tis you, madam, methinks,' said she, 'that rested here one day a few weeks since.'

'You are right,' replied the other; 'although, until I came to the house, I did not know it was the same. Is this your husband?'

Master Alwin had at that moment entered the room. Lady Adelina went towards him, and handed him the note, which he read; she then explained who she was, and the motive of her visit. She gained courage, and her trembling voice became calm as she proceeded. The benign and fatherly countenance of the old merchant inspired her with confidence; he listened with the utmost attention; and when she had finished he turned to Catherine, saying: 'You have heard what the lady says; now read this, and tell us what you think, for the child was intrusted to you; therefore I would not act otherwise than as you judge right. What thinkest thou?'

'What think I?' replied Catherine, folding again the piece of paper, the contents of which she had just read. 'What other thought could I have than to obey the word of him whose counsel even would be a command to me.'

Frequently since Lady Adelina had entered the house her eyes had rested on Catherine. She could not think what rendered the young girl's countenance so attractive. Features more regular, faces more strikingly handsome she had certainly seen among her own acquaintances and the ladies of Queen Elizabeth's court; but the maiden before her possessed, besides the freshness of health and youth, an undefinable expression of innocence, a look so childlike and yet so full of intelligence.

'Is that your daughter, good dame?' she at length inquired.

'Not so,' replied the old lady; 'she is from the country parts, and came to us some time ago with Barbara, Lady Margaret de Courcy's daughter. But perchance, my lady, you would like to see your little niece? Wilt thou fetch her, Kate?'

The young girl left the room; and Lady Adelina took this opportunity to question Master Alwin and his wife concerning her. The old man related what his friend Andrew had told him, and what he himself had witnessed of her devotedness to Barbara; the dame adding the testimony of *her* knowledge of Catherine since her arrival at their house. The re-entrance of the girl, accompanied by Barbara, interrupted the conversation. The former whispered something to the child, who at once approached her aunt, when Adelina embraced her tenderly, and tears filled her eyes as she beheld the daughter of that sister-in-law whom she would never know on earth, and of that brother for whom her husband had entertained such bad feelings, and from whom he now so earnestly desired forgiveness.

'Poor little thing!' she said sorrowfully. 'Those laws must be cruel that drove thee from thy home; and those feelings wrong that rendered a heart insensible to a brother's woes.'

The child looked up with wondering eyes at the speaker, whose words were to her a mystery.

'You love each other tenderly?' said Adelina turning to Catherine.

The bright smile that crossed the little one's face, the earnest

manner in which Catherine replied, 'Truly we do, my lady,' assured Adelina that her niece had found among strangers that affection and kindness in which her own relations had failed; and she sighed when she thought that, while a poor young girl had devoted herself to the care of Lady Margaret's daughter, Sir Cuthbert had only sought to profit by her parents' misfortune.

'Surely,' said she, 'it must cost you much to separate yourself from this child?'

'It does,' replied Catherine; 'yet, for her sake, I am glad that she should return to her family.'

'But when you were at Penzance,' answered the lady, 'you would not let the child come to me, who am her aunt. I did not at first recognize you, but now I remember how unwilling you were that she should even come to the Manor, and how you and the dame went away with her sooner than let me have her. I thought it was your great affection, and that you could not bear to part with her.'

'My lady, it *was* affection,' replied the young girl, smiling. 'Affection for that in her which is most precious—her faith.'

'Her faith,' repeated Adelina thoughtfully. 'You Catholics think much of that. You supposed that I should force her to be a Protestant?'

'I know not, my lady, whether you would have *forced* her; but I *do* know that you could not have taught her rightly, and a child so young would naturally have followed the religion of those around her.'

Lady Adelina was about to answer that *that* would have been no misfortune, since it would have secured the temporal welfare of her niece, but the remembrance that Sir Reginald had been willing to sacrifice all, even his life, sooner than relinquish his faith checked her, and she remained silent.

'I shall make all necessary inquiries,' she at length said, 'as to the journey into France; and I wish to go thither as soon as possible, since such is my husband's desire. The child must be ready to start, and let me know if she wants anything. I do not take her to my house, for I should not like to deprive you of her during the time she still remains in England.'

As Adelina spoke she looked at Catherine.

The young girl raised her eyes and tried to smile as she thanked the lady. Little Barbara, who had been standing close to Catherine, now left her side, and going towards her aunt, she said, with joined hands and a face expressive of intense earnestness:

'O, my lady, do not take me from my sister, Kate, I pray thee.'

Lady Adelina, who had nearly reached the door, stopped and turned back.

'You shall not part from her my niece,' she exclaimed, struck by the beautiful affection which existed between the child and her young guardian. 'No, 'twould be cruel to separate you; if, therefore, your friend will come to France, it will please me well to take her; and I cannot doubt but that my brother-in-law will be happy to reward one who has been so devoted to his daughter.'

'I need no reward,' replied Catherine. 'To see *her* good and happy: surely *that* is sufficient recompense.'

'Good she may be,' returned the other; 'but happy she will not be, unless you come with her, were it only to accustom her to her new home; and then, as I shall soon return to England, you can, if you wish come back with me.'

Catherine looked to those around, uncertain what answer to give. Little Barbara whispered, 'Come sister, come.' Master Alwin and his dame smiled approvingly, and remarked that she could return to them again. Adelina once more pressing her to accompany her niece, Catherine, prompted by her own heart to comply with such earnest solicitations, consented to start with Sir Cuthbert's wife whenever she wished. This being decided, the lady bade farewell to the inmates of Master Alwin's establishment, and returned home.

That evening all were more than usually serious at the old shop. The good merchant and his wife sat silent; Catherine bent over her work, while her fingers, following the quickness of her thoughts, moved with unconscious rapidity.

'Do you know,' said the dame at last, 'I don't like the idea of losing Kate.'

'Neither do I,' rejoined her husband, whose thoughts had been wandering in the same direction. 'I am vexed with myself for having encouraged her to say yes to the lady this afternoon. But methinks the little Lady Barbara would never have gone without her.'

'Indeed, I would not,' said the child.

'But thou wilt let Kate come back to us?' suggested the old man.

Barbara shook her head. 'No, I cannot let sister Kate leave me,' she replied.

'Catherine, Catherine, I fear we shall never see thee again, said Dame Cicely, 'But if thou dost return to this country, thou wilt find a welcome here.'

The young girl thanked her kind friends, and said that, although she could not promise to return, she would always remember their goodness to her, and always love them. Master Alwin then brought out one of his large account-books, to explain to Catherine how her money matters stood; a subject on which the old merchant often blamed his young friend for being too indifferent; so she now lent her utmost attention, while he told her how much money he had in hand belonging to her offering, if she remained in France, to send the amount through a French house of business.

CHAPTER XXII.

AMONG the many pleasant and picturesque old towns of France none perhaps possesses greater attractions for the lover of art and antiquity than the ancient capital of Normandy. But if, even now, when revolutionary fury and modern *improvements* have detracted so much from its venerable appearance, Rouen still retains many monuments worthy of admiration, what must have been its glory in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries?

We are told that, previous to the Revolution, it possessed thirty-six churches; scarcely half that number now retain their original destiny; and often the pious and artistic visitor in Rouen is grieved by sight of one of those noble monuments of faith converted into a warehouse, or turned to some other profane use. The din of commerce and worldly affairs vibrates with a strange and unhallowed sound through the narrow aisles and along the vaulted roofs of such sacred edifices, where once echoed the holy word of God and constant solemn chants. The sculptured saints might seem to look down from their fretted niches with pitying sorrow on the busy men who hurry to and fro, bargaining and disputing where their ancestors once knelt in profoundest adoration.

But at the time of which we are writing none of these painful changes had taken place, and Rouen still gloried in its numerous churches and convents. Some eighty years previous to the date of this story the Cardinal Georges d'Amboise had completed the magnificent Cathedral. The famous bell which bore his name rang out its melodious peals from the southwestern tower. At early morn its solemn voice floated over the silent town, raising holy thoughts in the minds of the awakening inhabitants; at noon too it was heard, and at its sound men took off their hats, women made the sign of the cross, and even little children joined their hands and repeated the prayer their mothers had taught them. For a moment all was silent, each heart was withdrawn from earthly objects, and it seemed like a brief visit paid by immortal souls to their future abode; and when they again returned to the concerns of life we cannot doubt but that they brought with them some memento of their heavenly flight. And when the day was well nigh spent, the Angelus once more revived in the hearts of the faithful the memory of St. Gabriel's salutation to our Blessed Lady—sweet echo of an angel's voice!

Long did the great bell continue to mingle its tones, now grave, now joyous, with each important event in the lives of the citizens of Rouen, until a day came when it was declared to be a 'monu

ment of vanity,' and as such melted into cannon-balls and sou-pieces bearing the date 'An II de l'Egalite.'

Besides its noble churches Rouen is not deficient in specimens of civic Gothic architecture. Not far from the ancient Palais de Justice, where the parliament of Normandy was wont to assemble, there stood, and still stands, an antique clock gate-house; it spans the street, joining on one side the tower of the Belfroi, from which the curfew tolls every evening. Seen through this archway the narrow street looked particularly picturesque, as the last rays of autumnal sun were darting over the high-pitched roofs and fell on the bright costumes of the inhabitants as they hurried to and fro. Now and then the passers-by turned round to look at a party whose foreign dress and appearance excited their curiosity. The strangers seemed no less astonished at the novel scenes they beheld as they gazed at the houses and people; often they raised their eyes towards the lace-like sculpture of the Cathedral towers, which rose high above all the other buildings of the town; and it was, in truth, towards this edifice that the travelers were now directing their course. After rambling through a labyrinth of tortuous streets, they emerged into a small square, and found themselves at once in front of the north entrance to the Cathedral, just opposite that beautiful door called the 'Portail des Libraires.' They paused to view the magnificent structure; but scarcely had the silence of wonder given place to words of admiration, when the clear tinkling of a bell made them turn their eyes towards the open doorway, from whence the sound proceeded. Shortly a boy wearing a white surplice issued from the Cathedral; he was followed by other youths bearing lighted tapers; in the midst walked, with downcast eyes and reverent demeanour, a priest robed in handsome vestments; and a rapid glance assured Catherine that he bore in his hands the Blessed Sacrament. For a moment she forgot that she was now in a Catholic country, and looked around with instinctive terror, fearing that the priest and his precious burden would be insulted; but she was speedily reassured on seeing that all the people near were on their knees awaiting the blessing of their Saviour, as He went to be the comforter of some dying person; and when He had passed many rose and escorted Him on the way.

Catherine, Barbara, and her aunt likewise knelt; it was the first act of adoration that Lady Adelina had ever paid to Jesus present in the Blessed Sacrament. During the journey which she had just made she frequently questioned Catherine concerning the Catholic faith; and although the grace to throw aside her former errors had not yet been granted, her mind wavered, and now, as she knelt beneath the shadow of the old Cathedral, and heard amid the religious silence that reigned around the footsteps of the priest, who passed quite close to her, she felt awed at the thought that perhaps Jesus too was passing by.

As for Catherine, tears of joy filled her eyes as she witnessed the freedom of Catholicity in France; it presented such a contrast to the state of constraint and terror in which those who practiced it were obliged to live in the country she had left. And when she had penetrated into the Cathedral, and saw the lamp burning before the tabernacle, the faithful praying, and priests passing fearlessly backwards and forwards, we can well imagine her happiness. With what gratitude did she thank God for allowing her to behold the consoling spectacle of the holy faith honored and respected, and the Blessed Sacrament surrounded by all the magnificence that piety and Christian art could devise! Perhaps her thoughts might wander from the splendid Cathedral, from the sculptured altar before which she knelt, to the hidden chambers where, in secret and with fear, the scattered faithful in England were wont to assemble for the celebration of the sacred mysteries, and then she would pour forth an earnest prayer that the Catholic religion might one day flourish there again.

While she and Barbara had been engaged in prayer, Lady Adelina and visited the various parts of the edifice, and she now returned to her young friends, and reminding them of the hour, they all left the church.

'Well,' said she, addressing Catherine as soon as they were outside, 'you ought to feel happy here, for your religion is held

in much honor among these people, and to one who, like you, believes in its truth, it must be a solemn and a joyful sight.'

'And I hope you too, my lady, will one day believe, and feel the same happiness that I do in seeing our Saviour thus honored,' replied Catherine, smiling.

'I know not; at times methinks the words you have spoken to me are true; but then it fades away, and I remember naught but my sorrows, which, it seems to me, are too heavy to allow my mind to rest on other things. Catherine,' she added, after a moment's pause, 'we must seek Sir Reginald: so let us return to the inn, and make inquiries as to his residence.'

Our travelers therefore retraced their steps to the homely inn where they had passed the night. There was a large fire in the guest room; for the evening was sharp, in spite of the sunniness of the day. Lady Adelina's attendants had disposed things as well as they could for the comfort of their mistress, who, nevertheless, wished herself back in her London home, as doubtless her waiting-women did also.

'My lady,' said one of them, as she drew a seat to the fire for Adelina 'there's not a person in the house who understands a word that is said to them. I do not know how your ladyship will ever live in this wretched country.'

'Well, never mind,' replied her mistress, 'it is not for long. I wish to speak to the hostess, to try and make her understand that I need her.'

The maid obeyed, and in a few minutes returned in company with the innkeeper's wife, a clean cheerful-looking woman, who, with much courtesy, hoped 'Madame found herself comfortable.' Lady Adelina, when a young girl, had acquired some knowledge of French, but having passed many years without speaking it, she now found much difficulty in making herself understood; however, owing to her own exertions, and the willingness of the landlady to try and discover her meaning, she contrived to make the latter aware that she wished to ascertain whether an English gentleman and his son resided in the neighborhood. The good woman was quite delighted to find out what the lady really wanted; and now told her with great volubility that an Englishman and his son had stopped at the inn about three years ago, and that they had taken an old chateau in the country. She had often seen them since, she said, at the church of Saint Ouen, and their servant used to visit the inn when he came to town for provisions; but the young gentleman had entered the army, and his father had left the chateau about a year ago. All this was pronounced with such rapidity that Lady Adelina comprehended but little of it; and it was not until she had asked many questions, and had heard the whole account slowly repeated, that she understood the truth of the case—Sir Reginald was no longer at Rouen. Had her journey, then been in vain—her sacrifices useless? And must her husband's desires remain unfulfilled? Must she return to England without having obtained for him the pardon which he solicited from his brother, and without restoring to the latter the child of whom he had been so long deprived? Such were the thoughts that traversed Lady Adelina's mind. Those around, although they had not understood the conversation, saw by her look of despair that she had heard some unwelcome news.

'What is it, my lady?' murmured Catherine, who had stood by, anxiously awaiting the result of the inquiries.

She was soon made acquainted with the facts we have stated; but while she fully shared the poor lady's disappointment and grief, her hopeful nature made her trust that their mission might still prove successful, and she tried to inspire Adelina with a like confidence. 'Perhaps Sir Reginald,' she urged, 'has not removed to any great distance, and some one in the town must surely know where he has gone.'

Lady Adelina confessed there was probability in this last observation, and therefore prayed the mistress of the inn to ascertain, if possible, where the English gentleman now resided; which she readily promised to do.

It was settled that our travelers should remain a few days at Rouen, both for the purpose of resting themselves and to allow time for the necessary inquiries to be made concerning Sir Re-

ginald's place of residence. Those days were happy ones for Catherine. Each morning she and Barbara might be seen kneeling in the vast Cathedral, and assisting at the Holy Sacrifice, with the eager devotion of those who have long been deprived of so great a happiness.

Although Lady Adelina had appointed one of the two maids who traveled with them to wait on her niece, Catherine could not bear to relinquish her post, nor would Barbara have willingly exchanged the devoted care of her young guardian for the formal services of a maid; so the former continued her affectionate watchfulness over Lady Margaret's daughter. She also found scope to exercise her charity in consoling and encouraging Adelina; for the poor lady was in painful uncertainty concerning her husband, and regretted her lengthened absence from England, and more than once during the six days she spent at Rouen she had almost determined to return to London without prosecuting inquiries for Sir Reginald, which appeared fruitless; and in these moments of despair Catherine was like an angel of hope at her side.

On the seventh day after their arrival, their perseverance received an unexpected reward. The weather had become intensely cold, and the flakes of snow, which for upwards of an hour had been falling at intervals from the gray and threatening sky, betokened an early and a severe winter. Lady Adelina sat shivering by the fire; her little niece stood at the window watching the peasants who hurried by heedless of the inclement weather; their wooden shoes ringing loudly on the hard ground attracted the wondering attention of the English child.

A noise in the courtyard, the high-pitched tones of the landlady, and the louder but deeper voice of a man, made Barbara turn from the window and look towards the door. In another moment it was thrown violently open; a sweep of cold air blew into the room, the entrance of which was immediately on the court.

'O, how cold it is!' exclaimed Adelina. 'Pray shut the door.'

A man wrapt in a large cloak, from which he shook the snow-flakes as he crossed the room, advanced with rapid strides towards the fireplace, the landlady following close behind.

'Here,' she cried in an excited voice, 'here is all madame wants; he will tell you all; he is monsieur's servant.'

'Sure, Mistress Catherine, is that yourself?' exclaimed the new-comer; and then, seeing the astonishment which his sudden appearance caused Adelina, he added, in a more subdued tone, 'I beg your ladyship's pardon, but it is searching the country through for Catherine Tresize and the master's little daughter I've been these six months past, and there they are, glory be to God! This is a happy day, and I not expecting it at all, but coming home quite downcast.'

While the good man stopped to take breath after this speech, Catherine explained to Lady Adelina, who had not yet recovered from the bewilderment into which this unexpected arrival had thrown her, that the person before them was a servant of Sir Reginald, whom she had frequently seen at the Manor-house. 'And Larry O'Toole,' she added, 'will be able to tell us where his master now resides.'

'That I can,' replied Larry. 'Ah, the Lady Barbara does not remember me, nor how I used to carry her in my arms when the mistress—may peace be with her soul!—went to the farmhouse, as she was wont to do.'

No; Barbara neither remembered the faithful servant nor the days to which he alluded; indeed, all reminiscences of her life previous to her removal from the Manor seemed completely obliterated from the child's memory.

'So you are Sir Reginald's servant,' said Lady Adelina, addressing Larry. 'This is a good fortune for which I was wholly unprepared. I am his sister-in-law, and have undertaken this journey to restore to him his long-lost daughter. Pray tell us how you chance to be here. Is your master coming?'

'No, my lady, not he; but after he came to this country, he and Master Austin settled in a queer sort of a house just outside

the town, and Sir Reginald, who spoke the French tongue elegantly, went to see the priest who lives at the great church yonder; and very kind his reverence was, and so was a French gentleman who lives in what they call a "chateau." Well, my lady, Master Austin was much with the family of the "chateau," till, sure, he learnt to speak like a native; and he and Sir Reginald would have been happy enough if the death of the mistress and the loss of Lady Barbara had not oftentimes made them sad. About a year ago the son of the French gentleman was going off to the army, and Master Austin said he would like to go also; the end of it was that they both went together to serve the French King against somebody else.'

'Well, and where is Sir Reginald?' inquired Adelina.

'That's the very thing I was after telling your ladyship. The poor gentleman felt terribly lonesome entirely when the young master was gone, so he thought to move elsewhere; It's to the town of Evreux we went, and Sir Reginald is there still. One day after our arriving, "Larry," says he to me, "I am thinking of going to England; I have now been absent four years; surely I am forgotten, and could safely pass through the country, and make an effort myself to find my little daughter." "No," says I, "begging your honor's pardon, it is not safe for you to go; but, with your leave, I will go, and try to discover the child, and bring her to you." Well, my lady, the end of it was that the master let me start.

'I have been to the Land's End, and seen the old Manor all in ruins; a sad sight it was, sure! Then to Exeter I went, and learnt that good Mother Bridget—the Lord have mercy on her soul!—had died of the plague, and that you, Mistress Catherine, had gone to London town; so back went I and searched the city; but 'tis very large entirely, as yourself knows, and mighty hard for a poor creature to find any one in it, though there is a power of people in the streets. Many is the weary day I've spent since I left his honor; but, sure, what matters past storms when a man is sailing into harbor?'

CHAPTER XXIII.

Snow—snow lying deep on the roads; snow crowning every hill and house-top, and clinging to every tree, and worse than all, blinding snow-flakes drifting rapidly along; such was the cheerless scene through which our travelers were passing a few days after the unexpected arrival of Larry O'Toole at Rouen. The lumbering wagon which conveyed them had toiled through the snow for upwards of two hours, since they had left the last village where the party had stopped to change horses. Urged by the postillions the tired animals struggled slowly on; more than once the clumsy vehicle threatened to fall over, its wheels sinking in the deep ruts, over which the snow had cast a treacherous covering, and on such occasions much time was lost, while considerable efforts were needed to extricate them.

'It's buried alive in the snow we will be!' muttered Larry, as he helped to raise one of the horses which had slipped. The Irishman's fears seemed likely enough to be realized; for at that moment a desperate plunge made by the frightened horse threw the wagon on its side. The screams of the women inside, the shouts of the postillions, the struggles of the horses, added to the confusion and alarm. One of the men had received some slight injury on being thrown to the ground. The travelers were extricated with much difficulty from their perilous situation, and happily they were more frightened than hurt.

After fruitless efforts to right the carriage, one of the postillions made Larry understand that he would try to find his way to the next town, and there obtain assistance.

Unharnessing one of the horses, he mounted and rode away. Gloomy indeed was the situation of Lady Adelina and her party. The servants had succeeded in dragging out some of the cloaks and furs belonging to the travelers; wrapped in these they walked up and down, afraid to rest lest the cold should benumb their limbs and the feeling of drowsiness which oppressed them be changed into the sleep of death.

It was becoming darker every moment, and still no one came to their help. Perhaps the postillion had lost his way; perhaps there was no town or village near where he could demand aid; and so the unfortunate travelers would be obliged to spend the night where they were, should they persist in awaiting his return. Possessed by these fears, Larry proposed that they should endeavor to push their way on. Having thrown cloaks over the horses as a substitute for saddles, Lady Adelina mounted; Catherine and Barbara shared the same horse; the maids rode in turn the remaining one. Larry, leading the foremost horse, waded through the deep snow, now encouraging with his voice the tired steeds, now trying to allay the fears of his companions. 'Sure, it is not far we will have to go now; we *must* come to a village soon,' he would say; and when Lady Adelina, after straining her eyes in every direction, replied that she could discern nothing but snow on all sides, he would still bid her hope.

'It's so dark, that sure it's in a cottage we might be before your ladyship could see it at all.'

Suddenly Larry stopped and the horses stopped, for in front of them rose a mountain of drifted snow, which completely blocked the road, and forbade farther progress. All hope of advancing was gone, and there seemed no alternative but death from cold and want. As well as they could, they cleared a space in the snow; when Lady Adelina, despite the recommendations and entreaties of her companions, laid herself upon the ground, declaring that she was too fatigued to stand or walk any longer. Soon, indeed, her fellow-travelers, losing all hope of escape, followed her example, and yielded too to the drowsiness which cold and weakness had produced.

Barbara was beside her faithful guardian, who had wrapt her own cloak around the child. 'Let us pray,' said Catherine to her companions. At such a moment, when human aid seemed impossible, it needed no persuasion to turn the hearts of the forlorn travelers towards Him who alone could succor them, and from that dreary waste, where they were awaiting the cold embraces of death, rose the silent incense of prayer. The numbness which dulled the senses took from them the feeling of fear which their awful situation would otherwise have created. The snow-flakes continued to fall with bewildering quickness.

Catherine felt oppressed by sleep; her weary eyelids closed of themselves, and in vain she strove to rouse herself; once or twice she pressed Barbara close to her, then drew the cloak more tightly round the poor little thing, and her look still resting on the pale face of the child, 'Heavenly father, have pity on us!' she murmured, when all recollection of the past, all knowledge of the present, all thoughts of the future, vanished.

When she again opened her eyes, there was no snow wrapping her frozen limbs, and fatiguing her tired sight by its dazzling whiteness. No, she was now surrounded by dimpanelled walls, and she found herself lying in a bed; but she was too weakened even to feel astonished at the change; her limbs ached and her thoughts were confused. Still one thing she *did* recollect, which was, that when she had fallen asleep Barbara was by her side; and she looked anxiously round for her little companion. At that moment a person advanced across the room; her dress was peculiar, such as Catherine had never seen before; as she approached the bed of the sufferer the latter remarked the beautiful expression of her countenance. When she spoke her voice was grave and sweet; but the young girl could not understand what she said; so making a great effort she faintly ejaculated the name of the cherished child—Barbara.

The stranger guessed her meaning, and smiling, pointed to a bed, where Catherine could distinguish the golden hair of Lady Margaret's daughter. The charitable person now gave her some warm drink, and making signs that she was to lie still, retired to another part of the room.

The sound of footsteps along a stone corridor were distinctly audible for a few minutes, and then a soft and solemn chant floated round the bed of the young girl and lulled her to rest. So the day passed, partly in sleep, partly in a state of quiet consciousness, during which she saw women, all wearing the same dress, moving to and fro. Occasionally she heard the same chant-

ing, which seemed to her like the singing of angelic choirs. When night came she fell into a deep slumber and awoke the following morning feeling quite refreshed. Barbara was standing by her bed. She embraced the child with joy.

'O, that dreadful snow!' she exclaimed; 'tis well, my little sister, that we did not die in it! Thank God *you* seem quite recovered! How are the others?'

'They are all nearly well,' replied Barbara. 'And it was because you took off your cloak to give it to me that your sufferings were the greatest. But, O sister, this is such a beautiful place! I have been all over the house with one of the ladies who wear that curious dress. I went with her to the chapel, and they were singing so sweetly.'

'It must be a convent, like those I read about in the old life of St. Bega,' said Catherine thoughtfully.

The young girl was not wrong in her surmise. When, guided by the postillion, some charitable townspeople had discovered the unfortunate travelers, and brought them to Evreux, they could think of no better place to lodge them than in the Convent of St. Michael, whose door was never closed against the destitute and the homeless. There they received every attention and care which Christian charity could suggest.

On the second morning after their arrival, Larry, who, being known in the town, had been conveyed to Sir Reginald's, presented himself at the convent grill, and asked to be allowed to speak to the travelers. Lady Adelina went to see, and heard that Sir Reginald was acquainted with their arrival; that he had prepared for their reception at his chateau, and anxiously awaited their coming.

'His honor would have been here himself, but he thought it better to welcome ye at his own house. It is only a step; it is not snowing now, so perhaps ye will come.'

They all agreed to start; and having thanked the hospitable nuns, they set forth. The term of their journey was nigh. Adelina had frequently and earnestly wished to reach it, and yet now that so short a distance separated her from the much-desired goal, she would willingly have deferred approaching it. The thought of meeting her husband's brother brought to her mind many painful recollections; she had never heard him spoken of but with a bitterness which had little inclined her to form a favorable opinion of him. And although she had since blamed Sir Cuthbert's want of feeling for him in his misfortunes, she figured to herself that Sir Reginald was one of those stern individuals who rigidly accomplish what they consider to be their duty, but are devoid of the kind and amiable sentiments which render virtue pleasing and thus, she persuaded herself, was the cause of his brother's dislike to him. Thoughts of a different character occupied Catherine; thoughts which made her also serious. Her hopes and wishes were about to be realized in the return of Lady Margaret's daughter to her parent, and she could fancy that the loving mother looked down from heaven with pleasure to witness her little one restored to its father. and yet, despite her efforts to dispel the feeling, a sadness crept over her at the thought of parting with that child, whom during so long a time she had regarded as her own sister.

After about a quarter of an hour's walk through the snow, the party reached one of those picturesque old chateaux, with high-pitched roof and mansard windows, often to be met with still in the country parts of France. It was nestled amidst tall shrubs and evergreens; the place looked much neglected, and the condition of the house showed that it had long been unoccupied. The grounds were extensive; here and there rose clumps of trees and bushy underwood, while considerable space was devoted to orchards of apple-trees, from which the famed cider was made, in the distance a row of tall poplars marked the course of a river. Such was the spot where Sir Reginald had fixed his abode.

Lady Adelina need not have drawn back trembling as the hall door opened; for no sooner had the father seen his long-lost child than, without noticing the rest of the party, he took her in his arms and carried her to the drawing-room. Her aunt and Catherine followed; the latter retired into one of the deep recesses of the

windows, glad to remain unnoticed while she quietly witnessed the joy of Sir Reginald. As to Barbara, her face and manner bore the impress of that sweet gravity which at all times characterized them: she readily replied to the questions of her father, but confessed that she did not recollect him, or her deceased mother, except by what Catherine and Bridget O'Reilly had told her of them.

'Pardon me,' said Sir Reginald, turning to Adelina, 'if the happiness which I experience at seeing my daughter has made me for a moment forget your presence. From what my servant told me, I believe I have the pleasure of speaking to my brother Cuthbert's wife.'

'Yes,' replied Adelina timidly; 'and I come,' she added with some hesitation, 'I come on his part, first to bring your little daughter, and then to implore your forgiveness for him—'

'O, do not speak of *forgiveness*,' replied Sir Reginald. 'I have always had for Cuthbert the affection of a brother; and I shall only be too happy to be able to give vent to my feelings with regard to him. Why has he not himself come, that I might embrace him at once? *That* would complete the joy of this happy day.'

Tears rolled down Adelina's cheeks; she no longer felt any dread of her brother-in-law, but the kindness of his manner touched her deeply. She briefly acquainted Sir Reginald with Cuthbert's position, and as she finished speaking handed him the letter which he had written from the Tower, and which had determined her coming to France with Barbara.

'Poor brother, poor brother!' repeated Sir Reginald, who appeared much affected. 'Would that I could relieve him! You had great courage,' he added, addressing Adelina, 'in undertaking so long a journey at this season of the year. May God reward your charity in risking so much to restore my little one to me!'

'He was anxious that I should express to you his sorrow for the past,' replied the lady. 'Do, I pray of you, say that you pardon him; he will be better pleased to learn, when I return, that I have exactly fulfilled his wishes.'

'Well, then, to satisfy you and him, know that I *do* pardon him from my heart, whatever grief he has caused me, but ill-will I have never borne him. So much for the past; now let us forget it, and look only to a bright future, when our family circle, which has been for a time divided shall, I hope be united; and if,' he added in a graver tone—'if it be not granted us in *this* world, I trust it may be in the next.'

Adelina was too much affected to make any reply, but her mind felt easier now that the object of her journey was accomplished. Barbara, while her father was speaking, had left the seat where he had placed her by his side, and going to the window, where Catherine was standing, took her by the hand and led her to Sir Reginald.

'Father,' she said gravely, 'this is Catherine.'

With the simplicity of childhood she judged that the name of her devoted friend needed no comment, and that others *must* know as she did that the word 'Catherine' expressed all that was dearest to her in the world. Her father smiled. It is more than probable that he had forgotten the child who used to come to the Manor-house to work for Lady Margaret, or, at least, he would have failed to recognize her in the young girl who now stood before him; but Larry had already told him that Widow O'Reilly and Catherine Tresize had taken charge of his daughter, and that since the death of the good dame, it was the latter on whom the sole care of the child had devolved. He therefore thanked her in words of heartfelt gratitude for her devotedness to Barbara, whom he hoped she would never leave.

'I have, indeed, done nothing to merit such thanks,' urged the young girl, who felt both surprised and confused at the praise bestowed on what she deemed but a very simple action.

Lady Adelina, her mission accomplished, was now desirous to return as speedily as possible to England; but the severity of the weather, and the danger which she had already incurred on the journey from Rouen, made her more willing than she would otherwise have been to agree to Sir Reginald's proposal, that she

should remain where she was until the snows had melted. A sad trial to her patience, however, was this forced absence from London, where so many interests called her.

One afternoon Sir Reginald asked Catherine to accompany his daughter to the convent where they had received so much hospitality.

The child had been greatly delighted with the kindness of the nuns and the beauty of their chapel, and the quaintness of the house, so different from anything she had seen in England, had interested her; she had therefore begged her father to allow her to go and see them again, to which he readily consented. The establishment was large, as it possessed, besides an orphanage and a hospital, a school for the education of young ladies. With these Barbara was permitted to amuse herself, while Catherine accompanied one of the nuns to visit the sick. The good religious soon remarked the willingness of the young foreigner to aid in their works of charity and join in their devotions; and although, owing to her ignorance of the French language, they could not exchange many words, they nevertheless conceived a great regard for her, and made her and Barbara understand that they were welcome to visit them again when they pleased, a permission of which they readily availed themselves. The more Catherine saw of the holy and peaceful life of the nuns, the more she felt drawn towards it, but she knew not to whom to disclose her wishes. To speak to the religious, whose kind faces inspired her with confidence, was impossible until she should have gained further knowledge of the language. Lady Adelina could not, of course, give any advice on this important matter, and then, again, Barbara would be so lonely without her, and the inmates of 'the chateau' were so kind that she felt loth to say that she would leave them. Yet the life she was leading did not suit her. Sir Reginald, full of gratitude for the services she had rendered Barbara, wished that she should be treated in the same manner as his daughter; she had not, therefore, opportunity for most of those active employments to which she had hitherto been accustomed. There were no poor at hand whom she could relieve, no children whom she could instruct. There was Barbara, indeed, and to her education she devoted most of her time. But here again arose another difficulty. She feared lest the object of her care might not receive the varied instruction nor acquire the different accomplishments usually taught to those in her rank of life; and her straightforward conscientious nature made her anxious that Sir Reginald, who trusted his daughter so entirely to her, should not be under the mistake of imagining her possessed of a more extensive fund of information than was really the case. She expressed her fears on this subject to Lady Adelina, who, while admiring the delicacy of her feelings, reassured her by saying,

'My niece is very young, and for some time at least will need no other instruction than that which you can impart; and when she is older her father can, if he wishes, have her taught those accomplishments of which you are ignorant.'

Days passed on, the frost continued with unabated severity, and the snow still lay deep on hill and valley.

Adelina watched it at first with impatience, then with a settled sadness which those around her vainly sought to dispel. Sir Reginald shared her anxiety for his brother. One day, as he sat alone in the drawing-room, musing on the strange events which had led to the recovery of his lost child, the door was suddenly thrown open by Larry, who gave admittance to an old gentleman of diminutive stature, erect, neat in his attire, and with a face closely resembling a rosy apple on which a light sprinkling of snow had rested. The little visitor stepped in with the air of one who feels quite at his ease.

'I fear I disturb you,' he said politely. 'Now pray do not stir; with your leave I will take a seat by the fire. This is cold weather for a man of seventy-two to be traveling, eh?'

'Yes, indeed,' replied Sir Reginald, 'and nothing but important business could, I feel sure, have made one of your time of life undertake a journey at this inclement season. May I ask to whom I have the honor of addressing myself?'

'Mr. Cyril Algernon—that is my name. As to important

business, you are right, as far as *this* journey is concerned; but I have frequently undertaken longer voyages in circumstances more trying for mere pleasure. I come now, sir, to see my daughter Adelina de Courcy who is, I believe, here.

'Yes, my sister-in-law of that name is here. I will warn her of your arrival.'

As Sir Reginald said these words the door opened, and Adelina, accompanied by Catherine and Barbara, entered the apartment. She stopped, and uttered an exclamation of surprise on beholding one whom she had fancied many hundred miles away. The little old gentleman, who seemed as cool and self-possessed as his daughter was timid and sensitive, quietly begged her not to be alarmed.

'Restrain your tears, my dear Adelina, I pray of you; surely you cannot be grieved to see me?'

'Far from it, father—but I have had many sorrows since we last met; and then your arrival is so unexpected, it has quite taken me by surprise. I shall recover myself in a moment,' she said, sitting down.

'That is right, murmured Mr. Algernon half to himself; 'but it were better still not to lose oneself. However, we are not all of one nature.' And Adelina did not inherit her father's, *that* is certain.

'Father,' resumed the lady, when the first emotion caused by the sudden visit of her parent had a little subsided, 'father, I should have gone to you, and acquainted you with my misfortunes and my plans, ere I left London, but you were as usual, on your travels.'

'I know, I know; I have heard all concerning you and Cuthbert, and I could not have given you better advice than to do that which you have done, although I marvel how *you* ever found courage to undertake this long journey.'

'But, father,' said Adelina with the voice and manner of one who longs, and yet fears, to know the truth, 'may I ask the motive of your visit? Do you bring news of my husband?'

There ensued a moment of painful silence, each looking anxiously at Mr. Algernon, eager to hear his answer; but none felt the terror of that moment of suspense so keenly as did Adelina. And she, too, could better read in the countenance of her father the sentiments which agitated his mind; she caught the uneasy look of his quick eye; she marked the expression of those firmly closed lips, which seemed unwilling to reveal the secret, of which he was the bearer. Had a violent and bloody death terminated the career of Cuthbert de Courcy? The thought was too fearful for his young wife to support; her cheek grew pale and her head sought rest against the high back of the chair on which she was seated.

'My poor child,' said her father, 'you are too much excited and moved by my sudden visit for me to converse with you now. To *you*, sir,' he added, addressing Sir Reginald, 'I should like to speak in private.'

The two gentlemen rose, and left the room.

In about half an hour they returned; both looked grave and concerned; however, Adelina had become more composed. Catherine was standing by her, doing her best to strengthen and console her, and to prepare the fainting heart of the poor lady for the dreadful trial which both foresaw, but to which neither dared allude.

'My lady, shall I retire?' inquired Catherine, who feared that her presence might be considered intrusive.

'No, no; I like thee near me,' was the reply.

'Adelina, my dear daughter,' began the old gentleman, in a voice which, in spite of his utmost efforts to appear calm, betrayed his emotion, 'we must be prepared to support every misfortune which befalls us; this world is full of them, but we must meet them with fortitude—'

'Alas!' interrupted Adelina, 'you well know that I never *could* endure either pain or grief; it is useless to speak of fortitude to one who never possessed any.'

'O, my lady,' whispered Catherine with that sweet persuasiveness of manner which had first won Adelina's confidence when

she had seen her at Master Alwin's shop, 'O, my lady, *God* can aid us to support all afflictions; *He* will give you strength.'

'His holy will be done!' murmured the poor lady and again she turned her anxious looks towards her father, who continued 'I know what your feelings and your grief must have been during the time which has elapsed since my Lord Essex's rebellion. They have been days of intense anxiety and much weariness, doubtless, to you and to Cuthbert also, and some spirits there are who can ill brook misfortune. Some there are whose heart can break, but will not bend; your husband was one of those characters.'

'*Was!*' exclaimed Adelina; '*was!* Then he *is* no more!'

In spite of her father's precautions, that one word had at once revealed to her the calamity which he sought to communicate by degrees. She had indeed from the moment of his arrival feared that he was the bearer of evil tidings, she had thought that her husband was condemned; but so long as Cuthbert lived, the hope of obtaining his pardon, or at least of seeing him once again, sustained her. Now that she learnt that he existed no more, her cup of sorrow was filled, and its bitterness overwhelmed her. She fell back in her chair fainting.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE first months of her widowhood were passed by Adelina in a grief so intense, and so complete a prostration of body and mind, as to render her almost insensible to all external objects. She seldom quitted her room, and the only member of the household in whose company she took pleasure was Catherine; when her heart was saddest, and she could scarcely bear the sound of voices round her, she would, nevertheless, listen gladly to the young girl, who spoke to her of the Passion of our Lord or of the sorrows of His holy Mother. Catherine endeavored to draw this afflicted soul towards religion, and not without success, for Adelina lent a willing ear to the truths she brought to her notice; but when her eager friend began to urge that she should embrace a Faith which, by her own confession, alone helped to console her, her timid and vacillating character made her dread coming to a decision and that not only because she thought it would displease her father, a staunch Protestant, but, in a great measure also, because she was naturally averse to anything which cost exertion, whether of mind or body.

Since the painful scene with which our last chapter closed, Adelina had learnt from her father the particulars of her husband's death; they were as follows: Mr. Algernon, on returning from one of those lengthened tours on the Continent in which he loved to indulge, and which rendered him a subject of wonderment in an age when traveling was neither so easy nor so general as it has since become, had heard of the rebellion of Lord Essex, in which Cuthbert was so deeply compromised. The unfortunate nobleman had already suffered the penalty of his daring attempt, and Mr. Algernon naturally feared for the safety of his son-in-law. With some difficulty he obtained permission to visit him, when he found him dangerously ill, and, indeed, it was plain that his recovery was beyond hope.

Cuthbert was quite resigned to die; he expressed great remorse for having abandoned the Catholic Faith, to which he had been reconciled by his fellow prisoner, Father Ralph. This good priest had occupied a cell adjoining Cuthbert's, and having learnt from his gaoler the name of his neighbor, and aware that he was Sir Reginald's brother, he had pleaded so earnestly to be allowed to see him, that the man at length granted his request. In one of the interviews that followed this permission Cuthbert de Courcy heard the history of his brother's escape to France, and became acquainted with the place of abode of his little niece, which intelligence he communicated to Adelina, with what result the reader is already aware.

The hardship and privations which he endured in the Tower, with anxiety and melancholy which oppressed him, combined

to shorten his life; and a few months after his arrest Mr. Algernon and Father Ralph were permitted to assist at his death-bed. His last moments were calm; and Adelina, when she heard that he had died on the day that followed her arrival at the chateau, could not but attribute the holy peace enjoyed by the departing soul to the pardon which she had solicited, in his name, from his brother, and to the reparation she had made in restoring Barbara to her father. 'My husband said it would bring a blessing on his soul,' she remarked to Catherine; and the feeling of having contributed to make his end happy was a relief to her sorrows, and took away the pang of the thought of her not being present at his death-bed.

The soul of Sir Reginald's brother was the last that Father Ralph won for his Heavenly Master, for shortly after, this faithful servant was himself called to receive the reward of his labors. Having been found guilty of saying Mass and reconciling persons to the Catholic Faith, he was sentenced and died, and his name was added to the long list of martyrs who shed their blood for religion during the reign of Elizabeth.

Let us now return to Adelina, who on one of the brightest of spring days sat sorrowfully in her room; Catherine was with her. Both had kept silence for some time; suddenly the young girl let the work she was doing rest on her knees, and raised her head to listen. A bird had just lighted on the branch of a tree near the open window, and was pouring forth his joyous lay; Catherine watched the little songster and lent a willing ear to his sweet strains, until by an unguarded movement she put him to flight. She then approached the window to see where the bird had gone, and stopped to gaze on the landscape which the return of spring had rendered so lovely.

'O, my lady!' she exclaimed, turning towards Adelina, 'it is so beautiful out; would it not cheer you to descend to the garden? I see Barbara there, at her old employment of training her favorite periwinkles, as when we lived with poor Mother Bridget.'

'Yes, child, I will go,' answered the lady, rising slowly from her chair and following the other.

For some time they walked to and fro in the alley of lime-trees near the house, and then seated themselves in an arbor at the end, which was just coming into leaf. Here they were joined by Sir Reginald and Mr. Algernon.

'Well, Adelina, I am glad to see you out; and since we are all together, I should like to speak of our future plans. Your health is better now; the weather is all that can be desired for traveling; we have long trespassed on Sir Reginald's generous hospitality. I therefore propose that we should start next week for London; indeed, my own affairs, and the settlement of yours, make it incumbent on us to reach home as speedily as possible. You will be ready, will you not, Adelina?'

'Yes, father, I shall be ready whenever it pleases you to start. And you, Catherine,' she added, turning towards her: 'you remember that ere we left England it was agreed that if you wished you were to return with me. Not only shall I be happy to take you, as I promised to do, but shall pray you to live entirely with me. You have so consoled me in my recent afflictions, that I cannot bear the thought of losing you; but I know how attached you are to my niece, so I can scarcely hope you will consent to leave her. And yet,' added the lady sorrowfully, 'she is young and happy, and stands less in need of a friend than I do.'

'Catherine has already promised to stop with Barbara,' said Sir Reginald.

The young girl remained silent; she looked serious and somewhat troubled, leaving those around her in doubt whether she wished or not to accept Lady Adelina's proposition. Barbara, who had stood by smiling while her aunt was speaking, feeling quite sure that her dear friend would not quit her, now looked anxiously at her.

'Catherine,' said Sir Reginald kindly, 'you know that my desire is that you should remain with my daughter; but if you think such an arrangement would not contribute to your happiness, or if the proposal of my sister-in-law appears more pleasing

to you, do not hesitate to tell us so. Much as I should regret your loss on Barbara's account, I would not for any consideration press you remain, if doing so should tend to make you unhappy; that would be ill rewarding your devotedness towards Barbara. Speak, therefore, without fear.'

'Sir,' replied Catherine, encouraged by the kind manner of Sir Reginald, 'it seems ungrateful of me to wish to leave you all, who have been so good to me and it *does* pain me to part from Barbara, nor would any worldly consideration make me do so; but,' she added, and there was something more than usually grave and earnest in her tone, 'but there are calls to which the soul cannot with safety turn a deaf ear. It has long seemed to me that God wished me to embrace a life entirely consecrated to His service and devoted to works of charity. I did not know how I could accomplish this until I saw the life led by the nuns at the convent yonder; and even then, I hesitated, having no one whom I could consult. At last I have spoken to the priest there, and he having assured me that I had a vocation for a religious life, I resolved to make known to you my desire to enter the Convent of St. Michel.'

Scarcely had she finished these words when the listeners gave vent to their astonishment in various exclamations.

'O Kate, you will not leave me!' cried Barbara.

'It would be better to come with me than to shut yourself up in a convent,' remarked Adelina.

'Very strange idea, certainly,' said Mr. Algernon half to himself.

Sir Reginald remained silent for a moment; and then, turning to his little daughter, who with joined hands was praying of him to tell Catherine that she *must* not go away, he said: 'Catherine has chosen the better part, and it shall not be taken from her.'

'O, thank you, sir,' murmured the young girl.

The following days were spent by the inmates of the chateau in preparations for two departures; that of Adelina and her father to England, and that which was to place an eternal separation between Catherine and the world. Adelina looked forward to her future lot with much less confidence of being happy than did her young friend, who seemed perfectly satisfied with the path she had chosen. Before Adelina the prospect was less inviting. She was about to bid farewell, perhaps for ever, to kind and sympathizing friends; to leave a spot to which she had, during her short stay, become attached; even the sorrows which she had there suffered had endeared to her the old chateau and its precincts. And what awaited her on her return to her native land? A home? Alas, she was now alone, and a widow; and the vast apartments of her London mansion would seem the more desolate when Cuthbert was there no longer. And friends? Alas, who among those whom she had called by that deceiving name would value the society of the fallen rebel's wife? or how, with her sorrow-stricken countenance, could she even show herself in the gay circles in which she had formerly shone? These thoughts pressed sadly on her, and she mentioned them to Catherine, who urged her once more, and with still greater earnestness than before, as the days which they were to spend together were nearly at a close, to seek comfort *not* in creatures, but in God.

'You are right,' replied the lady sadly; 'but I feel that when you are no more with me, to encourage me, I shall fall into despair.'

'Would you accept, my lady,' said Catherine, 'an old book which my mother left me? It will console you, I am sure.' Without waiting for an answer, she left the room, and soon returned with a handsomely-bound old volume of the *Following of Christ*, and placed it in Lady Adelina's hands.

'My name is in it, but you can scratch it out,' she said.

'My dear child, I will not; but I shall write mine under it, with the date and place when you gave it to me. For your sake it will always be precious to me.'

'And you will read it?' said Catherine.

Lady Adelina smiled at the earnestness of her friend, and promised to do as she desired.

The departure of Catherine caused Sir Reginald some perplexity concerning Barbara. He had the welfare of his little daughter too much at heart to wish to see her grow up in idleness and ignorance; and feeling unequal to the task of educating her himself, he at last resolved to deprive himself of the pleasure, which under these circumstances would have been a selfish one, of having her at home, and determined to place her under the charge of the kind and enlightened religious into whose ranks Catherine was about to be received. Barbara was delighted at the prospect of being near her friend; and a few days after both entered the Convent of St. Michel, the one as a scholar, the other as a novice.

CONCLUSION.

YEARS glided by so quietly, so calmly for the inmates of the Convent of St. Michel, that the footfall of Time was scarcely audible to them. That relentless measurer of human existence seemed to pass with softer tread through the silent cloisters than among the scenes of ceaseless agitation and constant turmoil of the outer world. Not that the hours hung heavily on the hands of the religious; on the contrary, they were so well filled, each one brought its appointed duty with such regularity, that their lives lacked those sudden transformations, those unforeseen events those crushing sorrows, and those dazzling moments of success which form marked epochs in the existence of those less-favored individuals whose lot is cast on the wild ocean of the world; for *them*, Time appears to redouble his speed, and to take a cruel pleasure in snatching from them the few moments of happiness they possess.

But let us return to the convent of St. Michel. The novice, Catherine Tresize, is now 'Sœur Marie,' and Barbara had passed from childhood to youth.

At seventeen Lady Margaret's daughter displayed in all her person the same candor and innocence, the same gentle gravity which had marked her earlier years. Although not gifted with rare talents, she possessed a serious mind and a clear judgment. Her whole appearance and manner denoted a happy but thoughtful nature, endowed with deep but not passionate feelings.

She had a taste for painting, and received instruction in that art from one of the nuns. Among Barbara's most successful attempts was a portrait of her, loved friend Catherine, in which she faithfully rendered the intelligent and expressive eyes, the noble forehead, and the heavenly smile of the young nun. That picture she took with her when she left the convent to return to her father's house, to be the comfort of his declining years; and when a fresh sphere opened itself to her virtues in the duties of a wife and a mother, the likeness of the faithful guardian of her childhood occupied an honored place in her new home. Her children, the eldest of whom bore the name of Catherine, loved to gaze on the sweet face of their mother's friend, whom they frequently visited at the convent. Some years later another generation of little ones crowded eagerly around 'grandmother,' to listen with never failing interest to the tales of her childhood: they learnt how the good Catherine, who had now passed to a better life and whose portrait hung over the old chimney round which they were wont to gather, had taken Madame de Reant (once Barbara de Courcy) from the Cornish Manor, when the cruel men had seized her father and the priest; how Catherine had promised Lady Margaret to care for and love the poor forlorn child; and how nobly she had fulfilled that promise.

Generation after generation passed away: the descendants of Sir Reginald's daughter had long ceased to speak the language of Barbara and Catherine; they were French by name and race, and French in heart and feelings; but one thing concerning their English ancestor they had not forgotten; namely, the history of the young girl who had watched over her childhood. And thus the picture and the tradition were preserved for well-nigh two hundred years, until the once numerous family of the De Reants was represented by only one individual, who, at the dawn of

the French revolution, embraced the sacerdotal career, and some years later was forced to fly from the relentless fury of those desperate men who, in the name of liberty, exercised so fearful a sway over the lives and properties of all whom their virtue or their rank marked out as fit objects of vengeance.

L'Abbe de Reant sought refuge in London, where his presence soon became known to the Catholics, who hailed with joy the arrival of a priest at a time when there were so few in England.

Among the objects which the Abbe had brought with him, in his hasty flight, was the portrait of Catherine. It may seem strange that he thought it worth while transporting this rather cumbersome and not very valuable painting; but there it hung on the wall of his modest chamber, and, save an ancient crucifix, it was the only mural adornment the room possessed.

As Monsieur de Reant sat one afternoon reading his Breviary, he heard a knock at the door, and, his only servant being at the time absent, he proceeded to admit the visitor, who proved to be a Catholic gentleman with whom he had become intimately acquainted. He introduced the visitor with that dignity and urbanity of manner which characterises the French priest, the best chair in the room was placed at his disposal; he was politely assured of the pleasure which his presence afforded; and Mr. Algernon felt all his natural stiffness vanish beneath the genial warmth of his friend.

The seat which the new-comer occupied was opposite the oval frame which encircled the sweet countenance of the nun; the setting sun lit up her features. Time had softened the tints of the oil-color, and as Mr. Algernon gazed on the portrait he thought he had never seen a more lovely face; the eyes seemed fixed on him with a calm happy look, and the lips, on which played a smile so full of kindness and intelligence, appeared ready to speak.

'What a pleasing picture!' the Englishman at length exclaimed. 'Did you bring it with you from France?'

'Yes, sir,' replied the Abbe with a sigh, as his thoughts reverted to his native land. 'Yes, I could not consent to part with it; I owe so much to it.'

'O, to that nun, I suppose,' retorted his friend. 'Well, I fancied that picture was a much older production than is possible, if you knew the person it represents. I should have said it was painted a hundred years ago.'

'And you may say nearly two hundred years; that is about its date.'

Mr. Algernon was fairly puzzled, and, having nothing to answer, remained silent, with his eyes fixed on the picture. His friend hastened to satisfy the curiosity which he had awakened in the Englishman's mind.

'Sir,' he said, 'I count among my ancestors a countrywoman of yours; *she* it was who painted the picture—there, you will see her name in that corner.'

Mr. Algernon read with some difficulty the words, 'Barbara de Courcy, Evreux.'

The priest then continued the narrative of Catherine Tresize's life, such as it had been handed down in the De Reant family from father to son since the days of Louis the Thirteenth.

'Catherine Tresize—Barbara de Courcy,' repeated Mr. Algernon thoughtfully, when his friend had finished speaking. 'I think your good nun has done something for *my* family also, one of whom many generations back married a De Courcy; we have in our possession some old plate bearing their crest and the initials C. de C. But here is something which proved more valuable to us than the plate; and he drew from his pocket a very old volume of the *Following of Christ*. He opened it, and showed the Abbe the fly-leaf, on which was written in a large legible hand, 'Catherine Tresize,' and lower down in much smaller characters, 'Adelina de Courcy, Evreux, 1602.'

Mr. Algernon proceeded to give an elaborate account of the manner in which he himself was related to this Adelina, and through her to the De Courcys. 'You see, sir,' he added, 'that you and I are consequently distant connections.'

The good Abbe, although he confessed unable to follow the long genealogy traced by his friend, willingly agreed hencefor-

ward to look on him as a distant cousin. The latter continued:

'This Catherine Tresize can be no other than the nun whose portrait is before us. Now the book she gave to my ancestor was the cause of my fathers conversion to the Catholic Faith, and perhaps also her prayers in heaven obtained for him the grace to profit by the words he read.'

'The deeds of the just live after them,' remarked the Abbe. 'And now I must explain what I meant when I said that I owed much to that picture. It used to hang in my father's chateau, near Evreux; above it, beside it, below it were portrayed, in various dresses, the bygone generations of the De Reants: there were fair ladies, once doubtless the admiration of the society in which they moved; there were courtiers of the days of the 'Grand Monarch,' clad in costly velvets; and grim warriors of a more remote date, who gazed sternly from their frames. Concerning all these there was little to be said: this one was famed for her beauty, that one for his wit; of many others nothing was known, save that they had lived and died, and borne the name of De Reant. But of this poor woman of obscure birth, who had come from a foreign country, the deeds had been recorded: over and over again did my mother tell me of that holy life always spent in pleasing God, and finally consecrated to him in the Convent of St. Michel, which still existed in Evreux when I quitted that town; how long revolutionary fury will let it stand I know not.

'Well, the thought that worldly grandeurs and frivolous pleasures pass, to be forgotten in this world by our posterity, and to be remembered in the next life, perhaps to the eternal shame of the soul who revelled in them, sank deeper each day

into my heart, and at length made me resolve to dedicate my life to God in the priesthood. My parents wondered at me; with tears and entreaties they endeavored to turn me from the path I wished to follow; they bade me consider that I was the last of a noble family; that large revenues and an extensive domain would one day be mine: but the happy countenance of the humble nun was ever before me; like her I rejected the allurements of the world. Sir, had I done otherwise, what would now remain to me of them? It is true, the storm which has burst over my unhappy country has driven me into exile; but God is to be found everywhere, and none can deprive me of my sacred character.

'It was by that picture that God was pleased to foster in my soul the first germs of a vocation; that is the reason why I could not bear to part with it. And you see,' added Monsieur de Reant, smiling, 'it has been the means of my finding a relationship where I little suspected one; and since I have no near connections, the picture of the mutual benefactress of our families shall be yours when I die.'

Mr. Algernon thanked the priest, assuring him the legacy would be most acceptable, only he hoped he should have to wait many years before receiving it.

'Sir,' he said, 'what you have told me of the life of Catherine Tresize would make a pretty story.'

'Yes,' replied the Abbe; 'and it might serve to exemplify the words of the Psalmist: "The just shall be in everlasting remembrance."'

THE END.

A DOUBLE SACRIFICE:

A TALE OF THE PAPAL BRIGADE.

CHAPTER I.

BROTHER AND SISTER.

IT is probable, dear reader, that the name of Schrambeck is to this day utterly unknown to you. Nothing recommends it to the attention of the learned; nothing distinguishes it in the eyes of the world; it is only the very obscure name we shall give one of the prettiest villages of the Campine,* where we are going to often meet the heroes of our story. A neat, pretty village in truth! See it backed towards the east by a chain of sandy hills raising their undulating outlines and arid summits above the evergreen pines grouped at their feet and climbing up their sides. At this side of the village all is dull and sterile; only some bushes of broom here and there, some clumps of heather waving their pale verdure above the bare soil where they could hardly live and bloom. However, in that very desert the perseverance and energy of the agriculturist have succeeded in triumphing over stubborn and sterile nature. The hills have been leveled, the heather turned up, the pines cut down in many places. Already, one can foresee the time, near enough perhaps, when the last sands of the moor, the last thickets of the forest, will have disappeared, thanks to those all-powerful efforts of labor and science.

But a few years ago, when the traveller, going to the village of Schrambeck, approached it from this side, he was continually impressed, sometimes even sensibly moved, by the aspect, at once grand and mysterious, of this sombre forest. The profound solitude of those woods, the solemn silence that reigned over that vast mass of branches, interrupted only from time to time by the monotonous cry of the cricket or the melodious cooing of the wood-pigeon, the vague murmurings of the wind gliding through the branches like an aerial voice from the world of the spirits of air, created a sudden impression in the strange traveller, and plunged him into a silent and profound contemplation.

But at length when he cleared the limits of the forest he could repose his eyes at leisure all over a picturesque and charming landscape. At his feet the houses of the village—small, white, and in regular rows, half concealed in their nests of verdure, ranged in a circle around a grass-plot in the centre of the town under the shadow of the clock-tower. This humble rustic clock-tower itself hardly rises above the surrounding roofs, as if it feared, in exhibiting to the eyes of the distant traveller its iron-pointed spire with gilded weathercock, to rob him of a pleasant surprise by apprising him too soon of the beauties of this little paradise. Then, on the opposite side, towards the west, quite another view, indeed, attracts the eyes by its charming freshness. These green meadows, smiling, blooming, waving fields of golden grain seem to rival the sun's rays in splendor and beauty. To the northward the undulating soil gradually rises, overlooking at its base a sweet green valley perfumed by sainfoin,† trefail, and hawthorn, and ending at the summit in a large fresh velvety plateau or green sward adorned with a thousand wild flowers, like a large garden, and forming a splendid natural terrace, whence the eye may freely wander over the surrounding country. It is in the valley itself the village nestles, at the foot of the mountain, under the shelter of the pine trees that form, with their imposing mass, their crowded trunks and green branches a wonderful pictorial background to its red-tiled houses. In fine, a short distance from the village, under the shadow of a fine group of

oaks and limes rose too the old mossy ramparts and high grey towers of an old feudal castle now abandoned.

That old castle had, in times past, its moving history that many an inhabitant of Schrambeck could still tell you; for it was the cradle of a race as noble as valiant, whose name is mentioned with honor in many parts of the history of Flanders, and whose warriors formerly acquired great glory and renown.

In the middle of the large green plain rises a chapel consecrated to the Mother of the Saviour. Pause a moment near the threshold opposite the iron railing that serves as a gate. Is not this modest edifice as simple and beautiful as the blessed sanctuary where the Queen of Heaven has her image and where prayers fly upwards, ought to be? Rest an instant at the half-way seat at the entrance, and raise your eyes to the white stone crowning the summit of the narrow façade and bearing this inscription: "To our august Lady of Consolation.—1615."

Here the afflicted, the poor of the village, come to deposit their burden of pain and anguish; here they come to implore the help, the pity of the Divine Mother. Should you draw near the little chapel at the first glimpse of morning or long after sunset, you are always certain to meet there piously kneeling on the seat, some anxious, weeping woman, often even some peasant, from the neighborhood; for the people of Schrambeck have not yet learned to blush for their respect for God and the faith of their fathers; they have preserved all their love and simple devotion to the worship of their Saviour and the belief of their ancestors. And now dear readers, that we have attempted to trace for you the frame and sketch the picture, we are at last going to begin our story.

It was a fine evening in May, 1860. The sun, purpling the plain with his last rays, was already declining towards the summit of the eastern hill. A pious youth and a young girl advanced sadly along the pathway that leads from the village of Schrambeck to the Chapel of Consolation. Both seemed a prey to bitter grief, their glances, gestures, and bearing revealing acute and profound suffering. From time to time a long mournful sigh swelled the breast of the young man, who walked on in silence, and big glistening tears coursed down the pale cheeks of the girl in the light shade cast over her face by her modestly-worn hood.

But at length these bitter tears were lost in a long and painful sobbing which constrained the young man to at once break silence.

"O! dear Mary," he murmured gently, "why do you let yourself give way to such despondency? Your sobbing goes to my heart. Believe me, dear sister, there is no occasion yet to despair."

"Let me cry, brother," she replied, still sadder. "Our poor mother will die; I see it; I feel it."

"My poor Mary, don't speak so. We ought to have courage and confidence to the last. A voice, I know not what, at the bottom of my heart tells me to believe and to hope."

"Hope, Joseph! Oh! how can we hope? Isn't the hand of death already on that dear brow—those venerated features? And those poor, thin hands, those pale cheeks hollowed by fever—don't you see signs—too certain signs? Surely the doctor was not deceived this morning in saying he could not ensure that our beloved mother had three days yet to live?"

And the sobs at these words suffocated the poor child, and her gentle voice was lost, stifled by her tears.

O tears, pious tears, divine tears, precious gift of the Creator! Woe to him to whom you come not to refresh, to solace—divine pearls!

The young man wept, too, but he strove to moderate his

* They give the name of Campine to a rather extensive expanse of sandy plains and hillocks covered with pine and heather in the north of Belgium, comprising part of the provinces of Antwerp and Northern Brabant.

† French Grass.

grief so as not to heighten the pain of his sad companion.

"Undoubtedly our dear mother is in great danger," he continued, after a moment's silence. "Believe me, dear sister, I share your grief; but—I don't know why—I haven't yet lost all hope. First of all that holy unction that the priest, in his solicitude, gave her yesterday, and that Holy Communion that fortified her body and gladdened her soul to-day, may they not bring her precious solace and powerful succor?"

"Assuredly, Joseph. Only wouldn't it be rash on our part to hope for a miracle? And it would indeed be a miracle if she were preserved to us, if she were restored to health. The doctor says so, brother."

"Assuredly, my poor sister. But here we are approaching the place where they invoke her who is justly named the Health of the Weak and the Comforter of the Afflicted. Let us fearlessly address to her our most fervent prayers, and, believe me, sister, even if it is a miracle we ask, it will not be the first obtained by the Queen of Heaven in favor of filial love, of all love the humblest and the purest. Let us pray, then, I repeat, with love, courage, and confidence, for something tells me we will be heard. The omnipotent God, who, when He pleases, opens the abyss of the tomb under His creature's foot-steps, can He not also snatch them from it if such is His will?"

Talking thus, the pious children stopped before the chapel of the Immaculate Virgin, and, kneeling on the wooden seat outside, began to pray in profound silence. For the health of their sick mother they invoked that other Mother, the incomparable Mother of men and of God.

During all that month of sunshine and roses—blessed month consecrated to the Queen of Heaven—their pure and fervent prayers were breathed forth at the foot of the altar of that Blessed Mother. Now the sun was about to set, and the first shades of the evening were slowly descending over the plain; yet their fervor was even increasing, their zeal abated not; and they still remained kneeling in silence near the threshold, offering the Lord their tears and prayers for the health of that tender mother.

And the last rays of the sun had faded away; and night had come. The distant sounds of the *Angelus*, borne on the breeze, floated melodiously over the plain, inviting the laborers still occupied at that hour in the silent field, to salute the Immaculate Mother with a prayer and an expression of love before returning to their rustic dwellings to repose after the day's labors.

The sweet tinkling of the *Angelus* had probably interrupted Mary's prayer, for the last vague far-off sound had scarcely died away in the air when she turned towards her brother continually buried in a mysterious reverie.

"My good Joseph, it is time we should return to our mother."

The young man shuddered at these words as if he had started up from a dream, although his calm, serious face still preserved the expression of prayer and recollection.

"Brother," continued the young girl, who looked at him with a surprised air, "how beneficent, how incomprehensible, indeed, is the power of prayer! I begin to feel calmness and confidence revive within me; and you seem to me even more reassured, more tranquil, than when we came here."

"It is true, dear sister; but do you know for whom I have just now implored the Virgin Mother?"

"For whom you have prayed? For our mother, no doubt!"

"Certainly; but I have addressed other supplications also to the Queen of Heaven and her Divine Son. Oh! my dear sister, are we not—at least I sometimes think so—too exclusive, too selfish in all our earthly preoccupations and griefs? For you know we have another mother too, the holy Church of Christ, for whom we shall have good reason to weep, and perhaps tremble. However, I know well this mother cannot perish; but she may have to undergo very cruel trials, very bitter sufferings; and at this moment, for instance, to what dangers is she not exposed in the person of her visible chief, our first pastor?"

"It is but too true, Joseph; only what shall we do, what can we do, poor children that we are! We can only offer the Church our prayers and our tears. Besides, has not the Lord promised to watch over His eternal spouse to the end of ages, and will He not save her from the attacks and insults of hell were He Himself, to that end, to multiply miracles?"

"Assuredly the Lord sees and measures the sufferings of His Church. And, when the hour of His vengeance shall at length have come, He will give her victory and confound her enemies. But He also asks—and it is only justice, sister—that creatures shall aid Him by their submission, by their efforts; and it is only very rarely, you know, He has recourse to miracles."

"I know, dear Joseph; only why, at this single thought of the perils and sufferings of the Church, do you let yourself be overcome with such bitter grief, when you have only your prayers to give it?"

"Nothing but my prayers, do you say, dear sister? Ah! do they give nothing else, those devoted men, those heroic youth our Belgium has produced, or those who abandon their beautiful countries, France and Ireland, and many other Catholic lands, too, to defend the common Father of the faithful against the avidity of usurpers or the hatred of His enemies? They know how to find, at need, other arms besides prayers and tears; they joyfully place their blood, their lives, at the feet of the Sovereign Pontiff, and would joyfully die to save him if Providence required it. Yes, sister, those generous volunteers may at length succumb to the superiority of numbers; but they will fall without a groan, well knowing that the land will not be bedewed in vain by their innocent blood. The voice of their blood, Mary, will be their voice and their prayer, much more powerful, much more glorious too, than the greatest victory acquired by force of arms."

"My good Joseph, your words are generous and noble, but they make me tremble. Would you leave our poor mother at this time. Would you leave your sister; an orphan and alone, thinking of your hard-heartedness, and weeping over her tomb?"

"I do not say that such indeed may be my resolution, dear sister; still, I confess, I cannot forbear envying the glorious destiny of those brave fellows who fly with such ardor to the martyr's death. The thought of them inflames my heart; I burn with the desire of following their example. And yet Providence has marked out my place here beside my sick mother's pillow, and nothing less than that sacred duty of unbounded devotion and filial love would hinder me from flying to the succor of that other dear mother. When I was at college I used to read hundreds of times those eloquent words, *Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori*. Oh! how much more honorable and sweeter it must be to die for the faith, for the Church of God!"

Poor Mary, incapable of sharing those heroic transports, was content to keep a deep and painful silence. Joseph, fearing to disquiet her by his desire of communicating to her a little of that generous ardor, said no more, and retraced, by her side, the way to the village. They were not long in reaching the first whitewashed cottages of the little town of Schrambeck.

There they met Teresa, the old crippled beggar-woman, who, stretching out her hand to receive the destined alms, eagerly availed of this opportunity to wish them good evening, although she scrupled to disturb their painful reverie.

"How is your mother?" she asked in a really sympathetic, anxious tone.

"Ill, oh! very ill, my poor Teresa. I beg you won't forget her in your prayers."

"My good Monsieur Joseph, how could I forget her? Who then helped me when all had abandoned me? Who then nourished and clad me during that rigorous winter? No, no! Believe me, the poor old cripple will never be ungrateful. May God protect you, my poor children, and bless your excellent mother, too."

And the good old woman, supported by her crutch, limped towards the Church of Consolation, as the good people of Schrambeck have called it, to offer up her prayers and vows of gratitude, after their prayers and vows of filial love.

The day had been hot, and this fine fresh evening seemed so much the sweeter and more tranquil. Most of the villagers were at their doors at that hour, partly attracted by the desire of hearing the news usually communicated to them at that time of the evening by old Piquet, *garde-champetre* of the little town, for the good man was accustomed to take his seat in the Café de l'Aigle to read the papers, after which he was able to answer the eager questions of the peasants curious to know of the events that lately occurred at different points in this vast world.

The good inhabitants of Schrambeck, seeing the two young people approaching, testified by their salutations, their gestures and their glance, their affectionate interest and real sympathy. They were particularly desirous of knowing the state of the poor invalid. But Joseph and Mary only briefly replied to those kind questions; they were longing to return to their dear mother.

Alas! at the very threshold of their house, Rika, the servant, awaited them, crying and wringing her hands.

CHAPTER II.

A VOW TO MARY.

Madame Van Dael, mother of those two poor children, was the widow of a just, honorable, and much respected man, who had long filled the functions of notary in the little town of Schrambeck. He was already ten years dead at the time we speak of, only leaving his widow, along with a moderate income that might ensure her a modest competency, the sympathy of his numerous friends, and the respect of his neighbors.

Madame Van Dael, dating from the time of her widowhood, had constantly lived in close retirement, only receiving a small number of intimate friends, and devoting herself entirely to the education and happiness of her two beloved children. An affection so devoted, a solicitude so constant, had been rewarded with the happiest results. Joseph and Mary were truly—and, indeed, deserved to be—the sole pride and joy of her heart, and their names were always cited by the good inhabitants of Schrambeck when they mentioned the most virtuous, the most submissive of the young people of their age. Thus long years glided by for the widow in the midst of profound peace and sweet tranquility; her calm, modest happiness had never been troubled except by the bitter remembrance of the love and virtues of the husband who had so soon left her on this earth. And even then the earnest, tender piety that inspired all the thoughts and sanctified all the virtues of the noble woman, brought her powerful consolations; a deep and tender calm that told her to raise her weeping eyes from the tomb to heaven, where the blessed spirit of the dear departed henceforth, she doubted not, watched over his children and his widow.

But for some weeks a new grief had overwhelmed the virtuous inhabitants of the modest house. Madame Van Dael had been stricken with a dangerous malady that increased from day to day; and henceforward the poor mother, groaning and dejected, seemed to have no more strength to struggle against the malady that menaced her life.

The physician who attended her, an old and faithful friend of the family, had not, it is true, yet lost all hope; still he had not the courage to tell the poor despairing children and weeping friends that he momentarily expected a last crisis that might certainly offer some favorable chances but would be fated to bring with it a more complete prostration, a more imminent danger, and perhaps death.

But on the evening we speak of, when they came to tell him that the widow's two children, not knowing the entire extent of the peril that threatened their beloved mother at that moment, had left her to perform at the accustomed hour their pious pilgrimage to the Chapel of Consolation, he immediately reproached himself with his want of courage, and hastened to his patient to watch by her bed, awaiting the return of the poor weeping children.

The venerable curé of Schrambeck, who was always ready to go to the house of mourning, had also repaired to the widow, upon whom he lavished his cares and consolations. The old servant Rika, seeing her mistress in such good hands, had withdrawn for an instant, stopping at the doorway to at length give vent to her tears and apprise the two children as soon as she saw them returning.

They had no sooner remarked the dejected and disheartened expression of the faithful servant's features, the tears streaming from her eyes, the convulsive trembling of her hands and lips, than their tears that had stopped for an instant recommenced to flow.

"Oh! Rika," they cried, seized with a new dread, "our mother—our poor mother—is much worse again?"

"Alas! I'm afraid she could scarcely be worse than she is," she replied, weeping. "O my good mistress, my dear children, what'll become of us? Oh! if God took pity on us! If I could die for her!"

But Joseph had rushed into his mother's room, and with choking sobs, knelt by her bed.

"O mother, O mother, surely you're not going to die," he cried in his grief, pressing one of her worn hands convulsively to his lips and breast.

"My son, my poor dear child, who told you that?" she murmured in a feeble voice; "but if it must be so, Joseph, may the holy will of God be done: may it be blest!"

The sad Mary, unable to speak, had seized her mother's other hand and silently covered it with kisses and tears.

The curé, quite moved, was also weeping in a corner, and the doctor himself, with the back of his brown hand, was stealthily wiping away the tears that began to gather in his eyes.

"Come my children, be calm," he said to them, at last; "all hope, I assure you is not lost. But be calm, I repeat. Your groans and tears only increase the fever, and consequently the peril that threatens your mother." In uttering these last words he had lowered his voice, so that they should not reach the invalid's ear.

Then Joseph, after a long kiss, letting go the feeble hand he pressed to his lips, rose, made a sign to the doctor, and drew him into a corner of the room.

"Dear doctor, I conjure you, don't deceive me," he murmured; "speak fearlessly, in the name of God; tell me the whole truth: it can only more or less confirm my presentiments, my fears."

"All hope is not lost, I repeat, Joseph," replied the physician; "however, this last hope is very uncertain, very weak. Besides I ought to tell you, I await a crisis, a very grave crisis, this night; but if your mother bear up against it, and struggles on until to-morrow morning, I can, in all probability answer for her life."

This answer of the doctor, however fatal the forebodings it contained, and however imminent the peril it seemed to announce, appeared to give this dejected young man a ray of reviving hope and courageous confidence; he raised toward heaven a calm, earnest glance, imploring its protection and invoking its succor.

"And now, Lord, life for life," he murmured in a low, earnest tone so that no one could hear him.

"The dean and I," continued the good doctor—"we have resolved for this night not to leave you until"—and here the worthy man hesitated, "until your mother has passed the crisis, the crisis that threatens her."

"Oh! a thousand thanks! Bless you both for that act of devotion and generous friendship!"

And, both clasping hands, they both left the dark corner whither they had retired for an instant, and quietly drew near the invalid's bed.

The most complete silence reigned in the sad house. A carefully shaded lamp shed a softened light in the invalid's room. The brother and sister, praying and weeping, knelt by their mother's bed. The priest read his Breviary in a corner by the pale light of the lamp. The poor servant, telling her beads, from time to time let a sigh escape. The doctor had unfolded a paper over which he ran his eyes confusedly, interrupting himself every instant to cast his eyes on the invalid's bed, anxious to watch the least changes in the condition or features of the invalid. The night—that solemn night—was already advanced. The deep and gloomy silence was only interrupted, from time to time, by the sibilant and oppressive breathing, or the still more racking cough which made the widow's chest heave painfully. But those sorrowful closed eyes had at length opened, for the doctor quitted his chair and quietly approached the bed. He held the invalid's hand firmly clasped in his, and felt her pulse with visible anxiety.

"O mother, mother!" cried the brother and sister together, bathed in tears. "Bless us mother. Lord have mercy on us!"

At that instant a glance from the doctor arrested the words on their lips.

But Madame Van Dael had heard that cry of filial love, wrung from such fervent attachment, such bitter anguish. She raised her trembling hand over the fair heads of the prostrate children, and murmured in a scarcely audible voice:

"O Joseph, O Mary, may God bless you, my dear children! Farewell, farewell, loved ones, until we see each other again in the sojourn of the blessed along with your father!"

And the feeble hand, icy and motionless, fell back heavily and the doctor again clasped it between his fingers.

As to the priest, he fixed a look of sadness, and deep anguish, first on the livid countenance of the invalid, then on the altered countenance of the doctor, as if to ascertain by that single glance what was to be hoped or feared.

Some minutes passed without any abatement of that solemn expectancy—that dreadful anxiety.

The poor weeping children saw nothing, heard nothing more, and scarcely breathed. Rika, prostrate in a corner, cried as if her heart would break. The curé already stretched forth his hand to give his last benediction to the dying woman, when suddenly the doctor dropped the hand he had until then held in his, and the two children trembled, moved by a sudden dread.

"Dead!" they cried, growing pale.

"Saved" triumphantly replied the physician in a joyful, tremulous voice.

Yes, saved indeed by celestial mercy and power. The decisive crisis had happily ended; the danger had henceforth disappeared; the patient soon fell into a deep, calm slumber, and the grateful priest began the *Te Deum* of the hour of the Matins. Along with this hymn of glory and benediction a tender and fervent prayer, breathed from those beating hearts, arose to heaven.

Oh! what a glorious day was that which followed that solemn night! The rays of a charming summer sun glittered in a clear sky; the glad birds hopped and chirped in the shade of green branches, the young flowers expanded their cups to the golden light of the dawning day. Oh! how radiant and charming that calm nature, the good God's beautiful earth seemed to the widow's children!

They had taken no repose during the remainder of that night. Should they not, before anything, go to thank their divine Mother, their august Queen, our Lady of Consolation?

Teresa, the old beggar-woman, had gone to the Chapel of Consolation at day-break, to pray for the restoration of her worthy benefactress. The brother and sister met her kneeling piously before the modest altar, and told her the joyful news, which she immediately went away to communicate to all the houses round about. Imagine the joy, the delight of the widow's numerous friends! Above all, the good Rika's happiness was indescribable; the poor girl laughed, wept, cried, and,

in a word, seemed to have lost her senses. We will say nothing here of the feelings of Joseph and Mary; a happiness so complete, so pure, may be imagined but cannot be described.

In all justice we ought to state here that the good doctor, far from attributing the marvellous cure to his attention, and the resources of his art, hastened to recognize, on the contrary, that a more powerful hand than his could alone have snatched from death the much-loved invalid of whose recovery he had despaired from the first moment.

A few weeks passed by, and Madame Van Dael's health progressed rapidly towards a complete restoration. A slight paleness, which decreased from day to day, and an inevitable weakness, that would soon disappear, alone revealed to attentive eyes the sufferings she had undergone and the deadly danger she had run.

The good curé, too, continued his visits, for he was in the habit of often visiting, as pastor and friend, all the invalids and weaklings of his dear flock.

The moment he presented himself one evening at the widow's quiet dwelling, the two children quitted their mother's room on seeing him enter, and Joseph, passing him by, in the shadow of the corridor, murmured in his ear:

"Don't delay any longer, I beg, Monsieur le Doyen; time presses—I can't wait; promise me to speak."

The priest, consequently, as soon as he had carefully closed the door leading to the lobby, replaced against the wall the chair Mary had prepared for him at his approach, took another, and established himself quite near Madame Van Dael's arm-chair.

He had to summon up all his courage to accomplish the mission the devotedness of a good son had confided to him, and he deemed it more prudent to preface this difficult avowal with a few words of paternal solicitude and affectionate sympathy.

"And how are you, to-day, dear Madame?"

"Quite well, I thank you, Monsieur le Doyen. My strength at present is completely restored," replied the widow, with a joyful look and accent.

"Poor mother!" murmured the priest in an undertone; "poor mother, how little you foresee, how little you divine, the price that marvellous cure is to cost you!"

"Explain yourself, sir," she cried, deeply moved; "your words seem to announce to me—O my God!—a new trial, perhaps a bitter grief."

"Christian mother," resumed the curé in a solemn voice, "do you know to whom you owe strength and health, cure and life?"

"Assuredly I know it; it is to the ineffable goodness, the omnipotence of my God."

"Undoubtedly. And I may justly add that this great celestial mercy has been granted to you in consideration of the prayers and merits of your children. It is to their filial love, above all, you owe this happiness and this grace."

"Oh! I have no doubt of it, father. How I thank God, who, in giving me such children, has given me happiness and glory."

"Yes, you are justly proud of them; you ought to be happy too; and yet, I repeat at this moment: Poor mother! poor mother! a cruel wound is soon to pierce your heart. You don't understand me; you can't understand me. Alas! know you to what a degree those dear children love you? Listen to me, and pray with me to the Lord, who in His goodness will give you strength. Your son, your beloved Joseph, has offered himself to the God of mercy and love, in hope of obtaining your cure, your health, your life. The day you were in the greatest danger your noble child made a vow opposite the altar of the Chapel of Consolation to take service in the ranks of the Pontifical Zouaves if the Lord deigned to restore you to health. I should add, dear madame, that he first consulted me, and I only authorized him to contract that vow on this condition, that you should give his generous project your full and entire approbation."

At this sudden declaration, this terrible disclosure, the poor

mother was seized with a profound consternation. At first a deadly paleness overspread her countenance, almost as quickly fired with a feverish flush. She bowed her head, clasped her hands, and was for an instant on the point of fainting, under the pressure of this violent interior emotion.

"Your son," continued the priest, "not having the courage to communicate to you his pious resolution, charged me with speaking to you, poor mother, in his name. I thought it more prudent to wait. You were for a long time too weak, still suffering too much, for it to be possible to inflict upon you at that time this news, this bitter grief. At length, however, yielding to Joseph's prayers, his reiterated entreaties, I decided on making known to you this sacred vow, on revealing to you the secret. And now, dear madame, it is for you to decide. Shall Joseph depart or remain with us, grieving no doubt, but half resigned and obedient to his mother's will?"

"Where is he?—where is my amiable, my generous child?" cried Madame Van Dael, her heart palpitating. "Ah! I knew well he loved me—not a doubt of it—but could I ever think he loved me so tenderly, that he was willing to sacrifice for me his future, his life, and perhaps his whole happiness!"

"Here I am, mother," gently responded Joseph, who had fallen at Madame Van Dael's knees, taking the hand of that beloved mother and kissing it fervently; "shall I go, good mother? Oh! accede to my prayer; say I may go!"

"Ah! my child, what love! My Joseph, thou fillest my heart with joy and sadness."

"But you'll not retain me,—you won't, dear mother? Heaven itself wills it. The Lord, who heard me, has subscribed this engagement and poured down His graces on us. The first part of that vow is already accomplished; say when shall I be permitted to accomplish the second?"

Alas! a painful struggle must then have certainly wrung the widow's heart; but it was easy to foresee that pious resignation, fervent Christian heroism would in the end triumph over paternal regrets, affections and tears. The widow's sad glances at one time were raised to heaven—at another time rested on her son; then, as it were, a ray of joy, pride and hope gleamed in her eyes. The humble and valiant Christian, the devoted mother, was going to unite her sacrifice to that of her son.

"Could I retain you, my son!" she cried. "Oh! no; I don't wish to appear less valiant, less generous than you. As well as you offered yourself for your mother's safety, I wish to offer my mother's love and tears on the altar of my Lord for the safety of the Church, His spouse, and our common mother. Go, my son. My love, my thoughts, my benediction shall not cease to follow you. Oh! certainly, your sister and I will suffer deeply, cruelly by your absence; but the God of goodness to whom we give you up to-day will undoubtedly grant us strength to bear it. Go, and when you shall have the happiness of saluting the Holy Father, tell him if I had millions I would joyfully send them to him, but not having them, I send him my only son. We pray God earnestly that He may restore him to us. And, my son, if it should please God that you should sacrifice your life in His honor, be resigned to that holy will, and face danger with a joyful heart, for, know well, that I join heartily in your sacrifice; I bless the intention, I accept the consequences, and I would esteem myself happy if you were to perish for the triumph of Christ and the holy faith. Say all that on my behalf to the Holy Father, and ask him for me, in exchange, his prayers and his benediction. And now, my beloved son, go fearlessly, joyfully, hopefully; your mother, whom you have saved, confirms your vow and joins in your sacrifice."

The voice of the courageous mother died away in pronouncing these words. The new Pontifical Volunteer, transported with gratitude, happiness, and love, seized the affectionate mother's hand, clasped it warmly and pressed it to his heart.

CHAPTER III.

"PRO PETRI SEDE."

We have not yet become acquainted with the hero of our story. Let our readers kindly allow us to introduce him to them.

We are in a large, superb gallery occupying the first floor of an elegant house in the city of Antwerp. The aspect of this apartment, sumptuous as it is, is somewhat strange. It is impossible to distinguish the color and appearance of the tapestries on the walls, for the large shelves disappear themselves under the mass of books, big and little, old and new, bound and unbound, ranged in order and with a certain elegance.

Allow us to examine for an instant this chamber and these books; for when we are opposite to a bookcase it is easy, after a few moment's examination, to ascertain the tastes, aptitudes and opinions of him who has accumulated and consults all those works. *Qui se ressemble s'assemble*, says the old French proverb.

Now what books do we find here? Voltaire, Rousseau, Diderot, Volney,—dangerous acquaintances! A little further on; Dante, Tasso, Milton, Shakespeare, Vondel;—these titles are more reassuring.

The third compartment contains purely literary works, written in different languages—Flemish, French, English, Swedish, German, &c. No need to give the catalogue.

Here, further on, is an imposing collection of scientific books, history, antiquities, natural sciences, jurisprudence, what not. To my thinking it might be that that grave studious person for the moment seated yonder and studying at his desk, was only an indifferentist in matters of religion,—a *libre-penseur* as it is called now-a-days.

A *libre-penseur*! Assuredly it is a great rarity among our good people of the Campine! And, honest Campinese who listen to me, if ever you come across one of these rare birds, put on your spectacles directly and contemplate him with all due respect, for it is an object interesting to look at and curious to study, the instructive and amusing sight of which will recompense you for your pains.

A *libre-penseur* is then a particular species of animal, that indulges in and imagines many things, but, however, is not very sure of being able to justify his title—that is to say, to think freely.

But we have not yet done examining the room.

In the centre are placed low tables supporting glass cases; only a narrow passage separates these crowded cases from the bookcases in which are ranged the volumes we have examined. Here are placed and classed, according to their importance and antiquity precious collections of medals and coins from the time of the Romans down to our days, and all shapes and all countries; these round, oval, octagonal or square—those of gold, silver, or copper, or even nickel. Here and there stand antique urns of pottery, marble, or stone, containing a little grey ashes or fragments of broken bones; then flint hatchets, rusty swords and poniards, trinkets, and pieces of armor.

Further on still, carefully classed and ticketed, we see skeletons of animals, great and small, and quite a multitude of stuffed birds, from the ostrich, roamer of the desert, to the humming-birds—those melodious winged flowers; then collections of insects, minerals, seals, portraits, postage stamps; in a word, this cabinet contains a collection of collections. Lastly, at the very end of the gallery, a multitude of small wooden figures, rudely carved, very like those children draw on their class books—two big dots forming the eyes, a stroke the mouth, and another stroke the nose. Beneath these hideous, grotesque figures we read the following inscription: "False divinities of the North American savages."

But where is the image of the true God, of the Crucified Saviour?

You will look in vain for it; it is nowhere to be found in this cabinet of the elegant, the thinker, the philosopher.

Now we cannot doubt it any longer ; we have actually penetrated under the roof of a *libre-penseur*.

Only this *libre-penseur* possesses more merits and virtues than many people perhaps think. Monsieur Morren—that's his name—is only indifferent and forgetful of the worship of his God; he is careless of his Christian duties and the destiny of his immortal soul, but he has, at least, received an excellent education in his youth, and has remained an honest man in the rigorous acceptance of that word. His manners are grave and reserved, his exterior serious and becoming; his private life peaceful, honorable, and strictly moral. M. Morren is simply a *philosophe*, with a mind too proud to believe without examination and reverence mysteries that so much exceed in depth the narrow limits of his reason.

Nevertheless, he is just and tolerant, and sincerely desires that all men may be able to guide themselves according to their lights and the bent of their personal convictions. So he sees no inconvenience in his wife openly devoting herself to those holy practices of piety that make an accomplished Christian woman so worthy an exemplar. In that respect, too, he leaves full and entire liberty to his only son, Victor, whom his mother's example encourages and sustains in the way of salvation, and who, in truth, has nothing of his father's tastes and leanings but his ardor, his enthusiasm for learning. For M. Morren we must repeat—and, besides, have we not divined it from the sight of his library alone—was always passionately devoted to study, to learned researches; and, alas ! it was this thirst of knowledge, his ardent desire to be his own instructor, that ended by driving this man of sincere and upright mind—who needed the assistance of a prudent counsellor, a good guide—in the ways of error.

But when, twenty-five years before, he had received the hand of the amiable Rosa Verbruggen, sister of Madame Van Dael, he was still true to the calm faith of his childhood, to the holy law of his God ; otherwise the pious Rosa had never resolved to be his spouse. It was only long after, through a gradual series of doubts and denials, that the fatal teachings of a false philosophy succeeded in extinguishing the light of faith in his soul.

M. Morren had always had a marked predilection for the study of languages. Of the seven or eight languages that had been the object of his persevering studies and profound researches, he spoke English, German and Italian with most elegance and facility. In this respect his son Victor seemed to have inherited the dispositions and brilliant faculties of his father.

At the time our story opens, young Morren, absorbed in the reading of a sublime, a divine poet, was leaning on a little table in a corner of a gallery, while his father was writing, seated before his desk. A moment after, the studious young man laid down his book, and, raising his head, said :

"How sweet and melodious is this beautiful Italian tongue ! And what a poet is Dante ! Let me read these verses to you ? Aren't all the features of the picture reproduced in the harmonious sounds !"

This sudden interruption could not but be pleasant and agreeable to paternal ears. M. Morren was passionately fond of his son, was very proud and pleased when he saw his dear Victor devote himself with ardor to his favorite occupation—the study of literature and languages.

The reading of the passage in question, however, was suddenly interrupted by a slight bustle outside, and a few discreet knocks.

"Come in," said M. Morren at once.

And the door opened, and Joseph and Mary, accompanied by their good aunt, Madame Morren, appeared on the threshold.

"Victor," cried the good father joyfully, "here's a pleasant surprise ! Our good friends from Schrambeck !"

The "*Divina Commedia*" immediately fell with all its weight on the table, and Victor, transported with joy, came forward, and cheerily clasped the hand of Joseph Van Dael, his cousin and the friend of his childhood.

"What a happiness to see you ! And how are they all at Schrambeck ? Your mother, then, is now so well that you could both leave her ? You came, no doubt, by express ?"

Thus they greeted the two young people with such a great number of questions that they hardly knew which to answer.

"You got our letter, telling you of the happy recovery of our mother, didn't you ?"

"Certainly, but we never thought her cure was complete and her convalescence so rapid that——"

"It pleased Providence, however, dear aunt ; otherwise we shouldn't have had the great pleasure of embracing you to-day."

"Meanwhile, be seated, my children," interrupted M. Morren, pulling the bell. "See, we are so surprised, so glad to see you, that be even forgot to make you take some refreshment, and rest yourselves. It is indeed a surprise, a pleasure ! Barbara"—addressing the servant who made her appearance at the door, "bring us directly two bottles of the best wine and some cigars."

"Yes, sir," replied the good woman, hurrying off as quick as her old limbs could carry her.

"Barbara, take my cigars, I recommend you," cried out Victor, after her, following down stairs the good old creature who had nursed and cared him when he was a child, and since then cherished a mother's love for him.

"Mary and I are going down to the garden," said Madame Morren. "There's such splendid weather to-day that it will be a real pleasure for us to rest under the shade of the arbor, and while Joseph will tell you all the particulars of his mother's happy cure, Mary will tell me."

The two ladies quitted the gallery just as Barbara reappeared bringing in the wine and cigars.

"Our visit seems to have surprised you," said Joseph, smiling to both his friends. "I have told you first of all that the attendance of our servant Rika is amply sufficient for my mother in the very favorable condition in which she is at present. But we have another reason, too, for making this little journey. My dear uncle, my dear Victor, I have come to bid you farewell—perhaps forever."

"To bid us farewell, Joseph ? How ? What has happened, then ?"

"Very appropriately you have a volume of Dante there on the table. Well, I am going to see the country of the great Florentine poet."

"What ! you're going to Italy ! But what are you going to do there ?"

"Fight for the Church and against the Revolution—shed my blood, sacrifice my life, perhaps, for the holiest of causes."

M. Morren was about to reply, when the conversation was interrupted a second time by a knock at the door. Almost immediately, two young men, evidently admitted to the intimacy of the family, of elegant manners, graceful appearance, and dressed in the height of the fashion, made their appearance.

"Very good ! Two more friends !" cried the master of the house. "Good day, Tommaso ; welcome, Ernest ; come, my friends, be seated."

The visit of these two new comers, however, did not seem so agreeable to Victor as to his father. At the sight of them a visible expression of discontentment, perhaps of contempt, was depicted in his face, although he strove to keep his countenance.

The two strangers began by making their excuses; they had simply dropped in to bid good day to their good friends, they said; but, as M. Morren was then occupied, they would retire, and not trouble him any longer with their presence.

"Upon my honor, you'll do nothing of the kind," replied the master of the house, with pleasant courtesy; "you'll surely give us some minutes—a half hour, at least. Come, my dear Tommaso, I know you are an Italian of the Italians ! Well, I have the honor to introduce to you my nephew, Joseph Van Dael, who purposes visiting your beautiful country very soon,

"My dear nephew," continued M. Morren, addressing Joseph, "these gentlemen are my friends, Ernest Van Dormael and Signor Tommaso di Roccabianca.

"I would always be very happy, my good uncle, to make the acquaintance of your best friends."

"Come, gentlemen, be seated, and let us drain a glass together. We'll afterwards go into the drawing-room," continued M. Morren.

But the young Italian had fixed a strange piercing glance on the honest face of Joseph, after which he exchanged with Ernest another glance, which seemed to say: "This young man cannot be—certainly is not one of our friends."

This haughty Italian with the tawny visage and aquiline profile was none other than a Carbonaro, formerly affiliated at Rome to many secret societies, and since then a refugee in Belgium. There he had introduced himself under the sonorous and pompons name of Tommaso di Roccabianca.

The drawing-room in which M. Morren and his guests assembled was particularly remarkable for the number and beauty of its old masters. One of the walls was covered with gilt leather hangings; the other disappeared under the floating fold of a precious old tapestry bearing this inscription: "Reydaurs fecit." Chests, sideboards, and old oaken coffers admirably carved completed the furniture, at once grave and sumptuous, and presented to the dazzled eye exquisite specimens of Chinese and Japanese porcelain, Limoges enamel, and Venetian glass.

It was not long before the conversation, which had flagged for a moment, was resumed with renewed spirit and vivacity. They all spoke Flemish, for Tommaso, who had resided for several years in Belgium had readily enough acquired the Flemish language, not only understanding it with the greatest ease, but even using it without the least difficulty.

"You told us now, my good Joseph," resumed M. Morren, "that you were on the point of entering the Pope's service. But what motives could have determined you to take such a decision?"

It was easy to see that the young man, thus questioned, felt a very natural repugnance at the idea of having the secrets of his heart exposed to the light of day, in presence of those two strangers. Nevertheless, after a moment's hesitation, he replied:

"I offered myself to God, my dear uncle, in return for that immense benefit He has deigned to grant me—my mother's cure."

"Ah! that's it! And do you really believe then, my child, your offering, your prayers co-operated in that cure? It was a miracle took place, then, according to you, my young friend. Come Joseph, how can you, an intelligent, sensible lad, delude yourself with such imaginings?"

"Allow me, my dear uncle—I by no means affirm that in that cure a miracle took place. The recovery of our good mother might very well have been owing to natural causes, frequent and regular. However, if God willed to accomplish a miracle in her favor, who then, tell me, I beg, could have hindered Him doing it?"

"A miracle, indeed! What an absurdity! Miserable old prejudices, old women's tales!"

"Tales in which many learned men, many heroes, many sages have believed. Tell me was the great Englishman, Shakespeare, your favorite poet, an old woman? Well, it was he who said, 'There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy.' Besides I refrain from affirming that there was a real prodigy, a miraculous intervention in my mother's cure. However, the doctor has declared that this cure took place contrary to all his forecastings, and, alas! all his fears. For my part I would be tempted to attribute it to the beneficent influence of the sacrament of Extreme Unction."

"Better and better," interrupted Ernest Van Dormael, with a mocking smile. "M. Van Dael, I see, is actually two centuries behind the age. He imagines an invalid can be cured, thanks to the marvellous effect of a little bottle of oil!"

"Sir," Joseph replied calmly and with dignity, "I will take good care not to seek to contradict you. As far as I am personally concerned, I consent to be classed, not a century or two, but indeed eighteen centuries, if need be, behind, if, to be counted among the wise men, the adepts of the present time, it is absolutely necessary to enrol one's self in the ranks of the *libres-penseurs*. Only," he continued, with increasing energy, "please, abstain, I beg, from wounding in this my religious sentiments, from turning into derision my most-cherished, my holiest beliefs; that is a rash impiety a Christian can not tolerate. Do you then think, sir, you can shake, weaken, by your doubts, your raileries, that august and holy religion which has been the strength and consolation of mankind for so many hundreds of years?"

"In any case I hope I am free to express my opinion, to give my advice. Why do you wish I should respect your rites, your mysteries—I who do not believe in them?"

"Ah! you do not believe in them! Well, I predict a day will come when you will regret not having believed; an hour will come when you will invoke with the supreme anguish of remorse and despair, the presence, the succor of a minister of God. But that God you shall have contemned, will He then grant you those precious means of salvation, those all powerful graces you shall have so often turned into derision? He alone knows! For my part I pray He may deign not to remember at that hour the blasphemies uttered by you against His heavenly goodness."

"But, allow me, my dear Joseph," said M. Morren here interrupted, eagerly desirous of giving another turn to this conversation so awkwardly begun, "what, I beg have all these explanations in common with the resolution you have taken of going to serve at Rome? Don't you know that to devote yourself to the defence of the Pope is to embrace a party without support and without hope—to dedicate yourself to a desperate enterprise, a lost cause?"

"As I told you, uncle," replied Joseph, become calm and serious, "I enter the Sovereign Pontiff's service in order to fulfil the vow solemnly formed by me during my mother's illness. But how, I beg, do you discover that the sacred cause of the common Father of the faithful is, as you say, a cause without support and without hope? Let us suppose that one of your neighbors—let him be named Jean Broron or Victor Emmanuel—without more ceremony, prepares to take possession of your orchard, your garden, your meadows, alleging that he wants those different portions of land to enlarge his estate. In that case would you look favorably upon those of your neighbors or friends who would appear disposed to sustain those exorbitant pretensions? As to my cousin Victor, would he really deserve to be called your son, if he would not entirely devote himself to the defence of your rights, even to exposing and sacrificing his life? And now, when a usurper, whom the just sentence of history will brand, when a crowned invader has ravished from my Father the possessions that rights the most imprescriptible, and contracts the most sacred, have guaranteed him, could I, ungrateful child, degenerate son, resolve to look on with folded arms while this act of violence, this work of treason was accomplished and the idea not even occur to me of upholding my glorious flag, defending my Father, drawing my sword! Oh! in that case would I not, bid farewell to my glorious name of Roman Catholic?"

"Bravo! Joseph!" cried Victor; "well said! you are the worthy descendant of the old Crusaders, our fathers. See now what consequences the consecration of those *soi-disant* principles of the extension of nationalities they are so audaciously striving to apply to Italy entail! Let the Emperor Napoleon discover some day that it is quite natural and perfectly legitimate to fix no other limits to his empire than its natural frontiers—the Rhine, the Rhone, the Alps and the ocean—what'll become of Belgium then, and what'll she have to say? Isn't that as clear, gentlemen, as the sun at noonday?"

"No, *capperi*!" cried the young Italian. "There's a great, a notable difference between the two hypotheses, Monsieur Victor. The *Unita d'Italia*—my dear sir, don't forget that!

Italy ought to be Italian—you can't deny it, and for that reason she ought to be *one*. Ah! the unity of Italy! All Italians desire it—wish it. *Corpo di Bacco!* The interest of a single class ought not to prevail against the interests of all. The Pope, whether he wishes it or not, will be forced to yield. Our beautiful country has but too long groaned under the yoke of foreign tyrants, nobles, and priests."

"So, sir, it is the unity of Italy you want,—it is that you wish for?" replied Joseph, with a slight smile. "And yet you know it is a dream—a chimera to which all the audacious attempts, all the triumphant arms of the Revolution can never give reality or life. Your ardent *Carbonari* hardly believe in it, and their more intelligent chiefs believe in it still less. Would you like to know what the *great men*—the zealous leaders of the Italian movement—have said of this *soi disant* unity of Italy, applauded in every accent, popularized in every form? 'The independence and unity of Italy,' wrote the Freemason Felice, then residing at Ancona, in 1829, 'are only vague dreams, vain utopias. But in the demanding of those rights, in the claiming of those impossible possessions, we find precious means of agitation, excitement, enthusiasm, and, consequently, we can make use of them.' Moreover, this avowal from the lips of the tribune, the great agitator, Vindici, at Castellamare, in 1838, dissipates all doubts, tears aside every veil from the tendencies and final aim of the Revolution: 'We have resolved,' said that factionist, 'not to allow in future a single Christian to remain on the face of the earth. The Church is our enemy; we will hurl it from its throne, and with our valiant hands dig its grave.' Rash madmen! Didn't even the experience of eighteen centuries teach them that the Church, at the moment of the most imminent danger, triumphs over the apparent death in which it is thought to be sunk, and suddenly arises, radiant and glorious, scattering widespread ruin over the graves of her persecutors? Ah! to be sure, your device, '*Unita d'Italia*,' may be pompous and sonorous, but, indeed, it is vain and illusory. I tell you, beware of uplifting it on your flags, at the head of your battalions, before our more modest and more Christian '*Pro Petri Sede*'—'For the See of Peter'—for, be convinced, if you were so audacious, you might expect the final humiliation of an irreparable defeat, all the more bitter and decisive after the ephemeral pride and exaltation of a fleeting triumph."

The conversation, thus begun, continued in this strain for several minutes longer, during which nothing was talked of but the political and religious situation of the Sovereign Pontiff, and the conditions of the existence of his temporal sovereignty. At length, Joseph, supported by his cousin Victor—who, during this discussion, had displayed an exact knowledge of the situation and of the facts, as well as a noble spirit of equity and remarkable good sense—overwhelmed the two Liberals under the weight of arguments so solid and reasonings so happy, that they soon prepared to take leave of the entire company, and at length withdrew, giving unequivocal signs of discontent, spleen and rancor.

"*Per Bacco!*" murmured the Italian Maso, as soon as they had gained the door, "if in place of finding myself now in Antwerp, I was in Italy, I would have recourse to my good dagger to promptly close the mouth of that odious soldier of the Pope. And, upon my faith, your friend Victor Morren would deserve it just as much. What business had he meddling?"

"Joseph," observed M. Morren to the young man, who remained with him in his room, "I'm afraid you have greatly irritated those gentlemen by your discourse and your violent retorts. You are a valiant champion, my good nephew. Woe to him who dares attack your principles in your presence!"

"My dear uncle, believe me it is for your sake alone I sincerely regret what has passed; but, as for those gentlemen, they only got what they deserved."

"Certainly," replied Victor. "My dear, good cousin, you have fought valiantly, with a sincere heart and loyal arms. That Maso, with his conceited airs, his provoking audacity,

and his sinister look has to me the very air of a rabid conspirator—a dangerous man. That name, *Roccabianca*, with its romantic *tournaire*, its sonorous syllables—is it actually his real name? It may be doubted."

At this moment Madame Morren, who had returned from the garden, accompanied by her dear Mary, came in. The conversation then became more intimate; they talked particularly of the happy recovery of Madame Van Dael, of Joseph's approaching departure, and of the state of things in Italy.

M. Morren, finding he had henceforward to sustain and defend single-handed his opinions against a number of adversaries so justly formidable, had at length to recognize that the Pope's cause was not so bad nor so desperate as he had at first affirmed. He, nevertheless, persisted in blaming, in a sense, his nephew's resolution.

"You are doing a foolish thing, my poor child," he said, "there's no doubt of it. But it is a generous and heroic folly. I venerate and admire the man who knows how to sacrifice his life in defence of his faith."

The hour of departure at length struck. The young people took affectionate leave of Madame Morren, their good aunt. Joseph walked in front, giving his arm to Victor, while M. Morren followed at some distance, escorting his niece Mary. The two young men seemed to engage in a serious and interesting conversation; they were evidently interchanging their intimate, perhaps their most secret thoughts.

When they reached the station, the train was about to start; so the brother and sister had hardly time to take leave of their friends, and address a last friendly salutation, when the train already moved off.

"Adieu, adieu, my children," cried M. Morren.

"Addio," repeated Joseph, quite proud of his first conquest in the domain of the sweet Italian tongue. "Adieu, until we meet again in one country or the other."

Again they exchanged a salutation, a glance, and the train disappeared.

But when M. Morren went into his library next morning at the accustomed hour, he remarked at once, to his very great surprise, that his son was not there. While the various motives that might have caused the absence of his dear Victor at that hour passed through his mind, his eyes chanced to fall upon an open letter placed upon the table before him. He took up this letter and read it, and then grew visibly pale; a rush of blood mounted to his cheeks and as quickly disappeared, leaving them livid; his lips contracted violently, his teeth gnashed, a gloomy glance flashed from his half-closed eyes, beneath his frowning brow, and stretching out his hand, he hurriedly rang the bell before him at the side of the mantel-piece.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CHILD OF THE RICH AND THE CHILD OF THE POOR.

"WELL, Father John, what news?" asked stout Sus, the blacksmith of Schrambeck—who, in the midst of a group of impatient villagers, awaited with curiosity, the goodman's coming—one fine evening of old Piquet as he left the Eagle Tavern.

"What news, Oh! great news, my boys. But I must tell you, I didn't get it from the papers."

"What is it then! Tell us, Father John, don't keep us in suspense."

"Well, then, tell me, do you know the Pope of Rome?"

"No, no, not at all," cried several voices in the crowd.

"That is to say," replied Tist, the baker, "we do not know him personally; but you may be sure we're not such folk as to be ignorant of his name and existence."

"That's all that's necessary," sententiously responded old

Piquet. "Well, know then, the Italians have resolved to deprive him of every acre of land he possesses."

"Ah! the brigands!" cried the blacksmith. "Ah! if I had them stretched on my anvil——"

"Silence, Sus, and let me finish. When I've done every one will be free to say what he's got to say. I told you, the Italians have resolved to seize upon the Pope's entire dominions, inasmuch as they want to make one large kingdom of Italy, to which they naturally wish to give a capital—and it's the city of Rome they've thought of for that. They want to compel the Pope, then, and the other princes, to give to them the cities and territories they've still in their hands."

"And if they won't give them up?" asked Wouters, the carpenter.

"Then," observed Tist, "they will take them forcibly. That's the way now-a-days."

"It is as clear as daylight," answered the blacksmith; "but at the same time, it's as black as the face of the devil himself."

"As to that," replied old Piquet, "it doesn't seem to me as clear as you say, and no more will it be so easily done as you seem to suppose. Know that at this moment a large number of young men, full of hope and resolution, strong and courageous as lions, are going to Rome to fight the Italians and protect the Holy Father."

"To be sure, I know that," retorted the short, stout, fat-faced proprietor of the Cross-Bow Tavern, in a disdainful tone. "It seems to me you think you are the only one that reads the papers. But what have these affairs in common with your Schrambeck news?"

"Well, since you won't wait for the news in question, here it is: Joseph Van Dael is going to leave the village here in a few days. He's going to Rome to enter the Pope's service."

"Bravo! it's well of him. Joseph Van Dael is a brave lad!" they all cried.

"For my part," continued Father John, in a mysterious tone, "I would readily believe—and indeed it seems to me I heard—that Joseph is going to serve at Rome, and fight the Italians, to fulfil a vow he made to obtain from God his mother's cure."

"Better still. Joseph Van Dael is a good son!" cried all these fine fellows.

Teresa, the old beggar-woman, attracted by all this noise, had approached the group.

"Well, Mother Teresa, do you know the news? Joseph Van Dael is going to Rome," said the carpenter to her.

"As if I didn't know it," replied the beggar-woman, bursting out laughing. "Well, what is there to say to that? Joseph Van Dael has a right to do so; and, besides, he'll not be the only one to go there I hope."

And, disdaining any clearer explanation, she hurried off at once, knocking her crutch noisily on the pavement, as she made her way to the hamlet of Laarhoven, in the neighborhood of Schrambeck, to visit her son Martin, who was in service with a farmer.

"I would like to know what he'll say to my project, my poor dear boy," she murmured as she limped along. "And then the farmer, and his wife and children, who like my good Martin so much! Ah! who'd ever have thought it? But isn't it really him I see there near the hedge with farmer Andries? Yes, yes; I'm not mistaken."

The young man the cripple had seen was a fine, vigorous lad, with well-developed muscles, broad shoulders, and round massive head covered with a forest of fair curly hair. Woe to him who would have aroused the anger and fallen into the hands of that giant, that athlete! It is only just, however, to say that the brave, robust Martin had a frank, open bearing, and a quiet, honest look; that the glance of his blue eyes expressed the benevolence, peace, and gentleness of a good and loving heart, and a tranquil conscience. This big Martin the laborer seemed indeed to unite the strength of the lion to the meekness of the dove.

"Martin," said Teresa, going up to him, and motioning

him to advance, "couldn't you accompany me a few steps of the road? I have something pressing and important to tell you."

"Here I am. What is it, mother?"

"You'll know. Come this way; follow me."

Both then left the field, and Teresa resumed: "My dear Martin, my son, you must go to Rome."

"I to Rome, mother? But I don't know how to read,"

"What! my poor boy do you think I'm sending you there to become learned? No, no; 'tis to fight I want you to go there."

"To fight? But when I was young didn't you tell me it was very wrong to fight, mother?"

"Certainly, when it's foolish to fight with blackguards, idlers and scamps in the streets. But it has nothing to do with that now. You'll not fight on your own account, Martin; you'll fight for the Pope."

"Why so, mother? What are they going to do to the Pope, then, that he wants me so badly to fight for him?"

"They're going to take away his States from him, drive him out of Rome, his capital,—aren't they capable of everything, those malefactors who dare to attack him? Martin, don't you remember what I told you when you were only yet a very little boy—that the Pope is our father, and that we ought to love, honor and help him as our father? So, my son, just as you would have had to help and protect your dead father, you ought now go and defend the Pope."

"You've already said it, mother. But what good would I do the Pope if I go thus all alone to help and defend him?"

"But, foolish boy that you are, you'll not go all alone. Just now, in every country in the world, there are volunteers who are going to Rome to protect the Pope; already there's a large number in our own country. Well, what do you want now? Why do you look so embarrassed; you don't hesitate to go—to enlist—I hope?"

"Hesitate, mother?" Oh! certainly not; for, at all events, the Pope is the Pope, and we are all his children. But—

"Well, what does that 'but' mean?"

"But I don't know the way. I have never been there," cried Martin, despairingly.

"Bah! what nonsense! Joseph Van Dael is going to Rome, and you'll keep him company. Take good care that nothing happens to him, for it is to you I commend him. I hope you haven't forgotten to whom your mother owes her life. Now, you know, I couldn't by myself pay Madame Van Dael all I owe her. But the mother's debt is the son's debt: so, if ever you happen to see any danger threatening the widow's son, defend him, sacrifice your life, if necessary, to save his."

"Enough, mother—I go. You needn't say any more. And yet—"

"Well, what next?" interrupted Teresa, impatiently.

"It is when I'll have gone, mother, you'll find yourself without any support, and all alone in the world."

"Come, come, don't let such a little thing disturb you, my brave son. I'm only a poor woman, it is true, but I'll get on very well as long as I have life, and if I come to die, some good Christian soul will be found to give the old beggar-woman six feet of earth. Once more, my lad, don't busy yourself with such trifles. So, every thing is arranged, and you're really ready to go?"

"It's all right, mother. And when do we go?"

"I'm going to find Joseph, and, when I'll have spoken to him, I'll come back and fetch you, that you may have an understanding together. Now, go tell the farmer from me that you're obliged to leave him."

At the same hour that Teresa was limping towards the hamlet of Laarhoven, a moving and painful scene, a solemn colloquy took place between an afflicted father and son in the library of M. Morren, our old acquaintance. The old man still held in his trembling hands the fragments of the letter he had found on the table. Before him stood his son Victor, disheartened and abashed like a criminal in presence of his judge.

"Have you lost your reason, my son?" stammered the old man. "Is it, can it be yours—this letter I've found that I've torn to pieces in my just anger? The testimony of my eyes assures me, indeed, and yet I can't believe it."

"Dear father, that letter is mine. Forgive me—I should have otherwise acquainted you of my resolution—my wishes—but I feared to afflict you, and I hadn't the courage."

"I can easily believe it. But how had you the audacity to communicate to me in writing your mad projects, your absurd folly?"

"My folly, father! It is thus, you recollect, you qualified the generous action of my cousin Joseph; but you qualified it, at the same time, as a generous, an heroic folly? Now, should this act which, being done by your nephew, seemed to you praiseworthy become absurd and reprehensible only because your son purposes doing it?"

"Folly, I repeat—signal madness, manifest aberration, phantom of a sick mind and a feverish imagination," cried M. Morren, striking the table and pacing from one end of the gallery to the other. After a few moments he seemed to become suddenly calm, and placed himself, still and immovable, opposite the unhappy Victor.

"And you come to ask my consent at the moment of accomplishing this act of signal madness?"

"Certainly, father; such, I know, is the duty of a submissive son, and—"

"A submissive son, say you? Irony, temerity, falsehood! Yes, you are a submissive son; yes, you are as docile as the serpent rending in its rage the bosom of the benefactor who imprudently warmed it. Then what do you say to me in this insolent epistle? That you have heard the voice of the Lord speaking to your soul, and ordering you to quit everything—your father, your country—to go to fight, to suffer, perhaps, for the holiest of causes; that you will not remain deaf to this voice. All these big words—admit it frankly—do they not clearly signify that, to follow the impulse of your blind fanaticism, you are quite resolved to keep no account of my advice, but put in execution, at any cost, your culpable and insane resolution?"

"Certainly not; it's not that I meant, father. I have asked your consent, I ask it again on my knees, by my prayers and my tears, and, before I've got it, you'll not see me go. O father! forgive me my great temerity in consideration of my affliction;—are you not afraid of having already too long offended heaven by your doubts, your sarcasms, and your indifference? Oh! don't place yourself between me and my duty, between me and my God, I entreat, I conjure you. Don't seek to separate me from my Saviour, to make me, in turn, ungrateful and faithless; for, father, if I were retained and turned aside by you, I'd be afraid God would justly smite you with some unforeseen adversity, some sudden and terrible chastisement."

"A truce to your menaces, your sermons, I beg," M. Morren here interrupted, in a cold and disdainful tone; "you ought to know I am not disturbed by the one nor moved by the other. But you say, don't you, that you'll not leave if you don't obtain my consent? Then I'm easy—you'll never go. How can you suppose—" and here the agitated old man recommenced to traverse the room, with hasty steps—"how could you have supposed I'd be so weak and senseless as to sacrifice my son—my only dear child, the pride of my old age and the joy of my life? And for what good cause, too, would I sacrifice him, I beg? For the defence of priests and monks whom I never liked, and whom I can't bear—"

"Father, for pity's sake—" interposed Victor, with bent brow and suppliant voice.

"For a foreign Pontiff, a Pope of Rome, for whom I don't care. You're pleased to call him—aren't you?—the Father of the Faithful—but am not I your father—I who reared you, I who nourished you, I who have loved you? And, ungrateful fellow, you want to leave me? And, pray tell me what has the Pope done for you, that his interest, his authority should thus supersede mine?"

"Oh! forgive me, father; I respect you, I love you, I'm not ungrateful," cried poor Victor. "Oh! if I could only tell you how much I love you!"

"You love me, cruel child! And you say you want to leave me! How can I believe you? Still, I'm wrong to irritate myself; I feel it and confess it. It's myself alone I ought to blame. I alone am guilty, since I allowed your mother to bring you up in the vain, foolish practices of her bigotry and superstition. It is she, I'm sure, has inspired this culpable extravagance, this mad resolution."

"No, father, I swear to you," Victor here interposed, raising his head with calm dignity, and extending his hand as if to call heaven to witness the truth of his words. "Your suspicions are unjust; my mother has had nothing to do with my resolution. I haven't told her of it, and to this moment she knows nothing of it."

"And, now," continued the unhappy old man, "I would crown a long series of weaknesses and imprudences by an act of signal folly! I would expose your life to chance, to the fury of the Revolution, for the sake of I know not what divine rights, I know not what principles! No, no. Let us speak no more of it, Victor; and, remember well, if you should now ask my consent to go and fight under the flags of Garibaldi and Victor Emmanuel, you'd obtain it just as little."

"But, father," resumed the young man, hesitating a little as if he regretfully recurred to this argument to gain the victory, "didn't you say yesterday you always had a sincere respect, a profound esteem, for the man who sacrifices his life in defence of his faith? So, don't you see you contradict yourself now?"

"But what is your faith? What are your principles?" replied the father, at once confused and irritated. "Nothing but bigotry, superstition, illusions, falsehoods! In fine I declare it is useless to discuss it any longer. Don't count on my consent; you'll never obtain it. This is my last word, and you know I'm accustomed to keep my word."

"O father!" cried the young man bursting into tears and embracing his angry father's knees. "Have pity on your son, don't look inflexible. I shall die of regret, of languor, if you refuse me. Can you pronounce my sentence of death, my best friend, my father? Could you, unmoved, see your son suffer and die because he sacrificed his heart's emotions to your paternal will?"

M. Morren knew well his son's extreme sensitiveness, which, at the same time, did not exclude a remarkable firmness of character. At that moment his father's heart began to be touched; he knew well that a fatal issue was possible and might perhaps be near.

"Unhappy child!" he cried in a voice husky from love and anger. "Victor, O my son Victor, you'll drive me mad, perhaps kill me. After all, happen what may, it doesn't matter. I prefer to see you die of languor by my side than send you to a distant land to fall miserably under foreign bullets. Besides, I'm mad myself to entertain such fears; one dies not so easily at your age. Go away and drive those projects, those absurd visions from your mind. Go," he repeated in a severe and irritated tone, "or I'll leave the place. I've had but too much kindness, too much indulgence for your rash discourses and foolish visions."

The young man, without replying then left, with bent brow, and tears in his eyes, while his father, a prey to painful emotion, continued to pace the room, his head drooping on his breast. But Victor, turning towards the staircase, suddenly found himself in presence of his mother, who glanced at him with lively astonishment. They descended together, and repaired to the lime-tree grove, where, seated on a verdant bank, Victor repeated to his mother all that had occurred.

"My dear Victor," she said, "your father is very far from having such an opinion of you; they are only vain words, unreflecting accusations that escaped from him in his anger."

"But the vow I have formed—my resolution, mother, that my father will never, never, alas! permit me to accomplish?"

"Your resolution, my son! ah! God alone knows how it grieves a mother's heart! And yet should I hesitate a mo-

ment to let you accomplish that act of devotion, of generous sacrifice that God certainly requires of you since He Himself has inspired it. No, I should not be less resigned, less strong and courageous than Joseph's mother—my dear, noble sister. And, Victor, my dear son, if your devotion should only be crowned in heaven; if the most painful of all trials were imposed on me, I'd still esteem myself happy to be the mother of a martyr. But, as you say, my poor child, I fear you can't obtain your father's consent. He doesn't understand, like us, the duties, the sacred mission, the will of God imposes on you. Be assured, then, my son, of all the goodness and indulgence of God, who will certainly exhibit His satisfaction at your good intentions, your generous abnegation, and will not demand from you an account of that vow your father's wishes shall have prevented you accomplishing."

"Then the justice of God will weigh heavily on my father. Oh! I would a hundred times rather be the only one to expiate, the only one to suffer."

"Well, my dear Victor, let us redouble our zeal, piety and fervor, every time we pray for the salvation, the conversion of your father. Oh! the Lord will at length be touched by so many prayers, so many tears; we will triumph, my son; a secret hope tells me so."

The young man seemed to reflect for an instant, observing a profound silence; suddenly, trembling and raising his head he cried:

"Mother I must—I ought to go!"

"But your father forbids you. Where is then your resolution? Will you persist in braving the paternal authority?"

"Oh! certainly not. But this consent, I feel I ought to obtain it at any price. Mother, I must go, I must; God calls me. Ah! if I could tell you everything! But no; it is a secret that belongs not to me alone—that I ought to bear with me into the tomb."

Madame Morren here fixed a glance of profound astonishment upon her son.

"What, Victor! secrets from your mother! Oh! believe me, this is bad, this is unheard of, and above all very cruel! My child, my beloved son, give me what belongs to me, give me my part, let me lighten your burden or share your pain."

"Well," replied the young man resolutely, "since you wish it, mother, you shall know all. Listen, dear mother, and when you'll know you'll blame me no longer." And here he bent over close to his mother's face, and blushing murmured some words in a low, tender, and almost inaudible voice.

His mother's countenance beamed with the light of heavenly joy; a look of ecstasy and love glanced through her tearful eyes, and doubtless reached, through the azure depths, the throne of the Divine Majesty.

"Oh, Victor, my dear son! Oh! what a treasure heaven has given me! Yes, my dear son, you shall go, even if your mother were to address her last prayers to heaven, and shed her last tears for you!"

And, pressing him to her heart, she imprinted on his brow the holiest, the tenderest, and sweetest of holy maternal kisses.

"Alas!" resumed the young man sadly, "my father will not consent; he'll keep his word."

"God will help us; we'll unite our prayers, my son. I'll undertake to speak to him; to renew your entreaties. God will do the rest; confidence, my child, and good hope. Go, now, and rest yourself and resign yourself to the protection of God and your mother's efforts."

Madame Morren had no doubt presumed too much on the influence she ordinarily exercised over her husband's mind. M. Morren remained deaf to all arguments; indifferent to all reasonings, insensible to all prayers.

"Such is my will; my resolution is immovable," he repeated in a determined tone. "Let Victor cease to solicit me; let him be resigned; I'll never, never, consent to this departure."

And Victor appeared to be resigned, and ceased to importune his father. But a few days had not passed by when the wearied look of his young face betrayed the fatal traces of those

secret pangs, those holy, saddening aspirations. The young man with the rosy complexion, the brilliant eyes, the light, graceful, yet robust figure, gave place to a sad and gentle dreamer, a frail exile who seemed drooping towards the shadows of the tomb. Now this complete change, as sudden as fearful, naturally could not escape a father's eye. The old man grew anxious, afflicted, and yet would not give in.

"My consent" No, never! never!" he repeated after each new terror, each new grief. Indeed, could a skeptical and indifferent, incredulous and unbelieving father, consent of himself to the accomplishment of that sacrifice of an only and tenderly loved son on the altar of faith and love?

CHAPTER V.

THE DEPARTURE.

The much-desired day at length dawned. It was one of the calmest, purest, the sun had ever adorned with its radiant light.

The whole village of Schrambeck was *en fête*. From the trees overshadowing the great market-place depended the Belgian tricolor, or Pontifical banners displaying on a white ground the Tiara and Cross-keys. The façades of several buildings and some large houses were decorated with devices expressive of joy and prosperity to the defenders of the Holy Father. Some of the townsfolk were putting the last finishing touch to the decorations of their dwellings; others, including several of our old acquaintances, were assembled near the church door exchanging comments and reflections.

"What are they waiting for so long? They ought to be here already," declared the hostess of the Cross-bow.

"Bah! they can't be long now," replied the rural guard. "Half an hour ago I saw Martin, happy as a king and newly accoutred, going into Madame Van Dael's."

"Was his mother with him?" asked the baker's wife.

"Not a doubt of it," replied the blacksmith. "Truly that old Teresa is a brave woman."

"She's a good soul any way," said Wouters, the carpenter. "But, don't you know Madame Van Dael and Joseph spared neither applications, trouble, nor efforts to get that poor old Teresa into the alms-house? It's certainly a great happiness for her; she has now an asylum and a morsel of bread for the rest of her days."

"Indeed those Van Dael's are excellent people," continued the blacksmith, Sus. "If I could be any use whatever to the lady, in Joseph's absence, she may count on me; I am entirely devoted to her. There's nothing I'm not ready to do to please her."

"What a pity Victor Morren can't accompany them!" sighed old father John. "The poor lad would have given his right hand to obtain his father's consent; but that stubborn old Morren wouldn't listen to him." 'Twas Joseph told me, for he got a letter from his cousin, who'd be here now rejoicing, and ready to go, if his father were more tractable.

"Here they are! here they are!" suddenly shouted the spectators grouped in the high street of the village. For Madame Van Dael approached with Joseph and Mary, Teresa following with her son Martin.

The young volunteers were received with clapping of hands as well as vociferous and sympathetic acclamations. Old Jean Pierre Piquet, who had made his way to the front, applauded with all his vigor, to show the sincerity of his enthusiasm.

"Bravo! Joseph, bravo! Martin; you're an honor to Schrambeck!"

"Indeed, my friends, you're too good; believe me, we don't deserve such honor," said young Van Dael, cordially shaking hands with Piquet and his honest companions.

"You deserve much more," responded Piquet in a determined tone. "I served under Napoleon, and you know I'm

proud of it; but I'd be prouder still if I could serve the Pope. Ah! I'd like to be able to go with you, Joseph; only these old bones have refused to do service.

"No matter, my friends," replied the young volunteer; "while we'll be fighting yonder, you'll not forget, at least, to pray for the Pope and us. In this way we'll all work together unitedly for the triumph of the same just, noble, and holy cause. And as soon as, on my arrival in Rome, I shall be presented to the Pope, I'll beg him to send his benediction to all his children in Schrambeck." Here Joseph's voice was lost in the midst of a tumult of bravos, huzzas, and joyful acclamations.

Already the majestic sounds of the organ floated in long cadences under the church roof—one had said a hymn of victory blending with the meek and humble murmur of an ardent prayer breathed by angel voices. At one time the moving strains of a sweet and impressive melody rose with a delicious harmony and flew to heaven on the wings of the breeze; at another, resounded the metallic notes of the trumpet, proclaiming deadly vengeance to the enemy, while the lugubrious and sonorous roll of the solemn, far-sounding drum, broke on the ear, like the mutterings of the thunder, menacing, at God's command, the guilty and the impious.

The new volunteers accompanied by their relatives, had entered the church, where most of the inhabitants of Schrambeck had already assembled, and knelt side by side at the foot of the altar. The venerable curé, vested in his white surplice, was not long making his appearance, emerging from the sacristy, and slowly approaching the altar, where he knelt and intoned the *Veni Creator*, while his voice, trembling under the sway of profound emotion, blended with the majestic strains of the choir, invoking the power and favor of the Lord God of Armies.

When the last notes of the solemn hymn had ceased to resound through the church, the priest, turning towards the young warriors, addressed them in his paternal language, at once simple and eloquent, tender words of adieu in his name and that of all the inhabitants of the parish, vividly and touchingly portraying the sufferings and oppression that overwhelmed the Church and See of Peter, and the glorious mission of those who courageously devoted themselves to its defence. "Go, children of my love," he pursued, "go, fly to the combat, full of zeal and valor! The God of Armies will environ you with His strength and His glory; He will overshadow you with His wings, at once your rampart and your buckler. He has given His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways. In the midst of the combat, He will fight by your side; and you may then see accomplished those words of the sacred volume: 'A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee. But thou shalt consider with thine eyes, and shalt see the reward of sinners.' And, dear children, on your joyful return we will intone the *Te Deum* of deliverance, more striking and solemn still, than that hymn of invocation in which we have implored God's benediction and graces."

The priest descended from the altar, the congregation left the church, and the stirring strains of the Schrambeck band playing the Belgian national airs, caught up by the crowd and repeated with incredible vigor, as, singing and clapping hands, they proceeded to the railway station in the midst of a regular transport of joy and enthusiasm, filled the air with music.

They were not long in reaching the station, quite near the market-place. Joseph and Martin shook hands several times with their friends and acquaintances, and then withdrew to bid their families a last farewell. Madame Van Dael was pale but firm; Joseph was equally courageous and resigned; but Mary, younger and weaker, shed torrents of tears. Teresa, meanwhile, had taken Martin aside, and placed in his hands a bag containing twenty-five francs she had got from Madame Van Dael and others in charity, and which she sent as an offering to the Pope.

At length the train drew up, the clock struck, and the band

immediately began Magazari's fine popular air, the "Hymn to Pius IX." Then a last clasp of the hand, a last embrace, and mother and son, sister and brother, were separated for a long time; hats, handkerchiefs, and friendly hands were waved in air; and a great shout of joy burst from the crowd. "Long live the Pontiff King! Long live his valiant army! Farewell! farewell!" and "Come back conquerors," were the acclamations that accompanied them as the train moved rapidly off.

But what had become of Victor all this time?

The young man seemed completely metamorphosed, his face beamed with such hope and confidence. His mother and he had struggled so courageously, prayed so humbly, that M. Morren had at length yielded to the influence of that mute despair, those tender and fervent prayers. Besides, his philosophic pride triumphed over his obstinacy. Nothing irritated him so much as the justly merited reproach of partiality and inconsistency, and his wife continually insisted on the flagrant contradiction between his actions and his principles. He always professed, and loudly proclaimed, as an essential maxim, that every one was free to act according to his convictions; he even looked on the man who did not conform his acts to his principles, at any cost, as a coward and a poltroon. Yet he refused Victor leave to act according to the inspirations of his conscience and the bent of his mind, and thus placed himself in contradiction with his principles.

Thus, paternal love long struggled with the austere stoicism of the philosopher in that lacerated heart. Then the god of the free-thinkers—Pride of Reason—triumphed. Still, paternal love, it must be admitted, had its share in that decisive victory; for M. Morren could not witness, without a lively emotion, the habitual state of lassitude and suffering that, from day to day, gravely menaced Victor's health, and seemed to presage a fatal issue of this struggle between the aspirations of the son and the repugnance of the father.

"After all, Victor is of age, and consequently free to do as he likes," said he one day, irritated and fatigued by this useless resistance. "I consent then to his going if he persists in his design. But let him not imagine, however, that I can ever approve of such conduct."

Desirous of avoiding as much as possible painful parting scenes, he had resolved to go away for some days, and not return until Victor had left for Rome; but intimated that if Victor wished he might come and say good-bye.

Victor hastened to respond to his father's summons.

"Oh! how happy you have made me and how much I thank you!" he cried, going in, and clasping his hands.

"No thanks," interrupted the old man harshly, "my weakness, I know well, only deserves reproaches. Oh! unhappy child," he continued, in a gentler tone, his eyes already filling with tears, "you, whom I have loved so much, and who, in return have given me such pain, may you be happier in your hazardous enterprise than your father! Farewell! don't forget us, and may I soon see you back!"

"O father, I have strong hopes of it: God will grant us that—the greatest happiness of all. And let me tell you a time will come, I'm sure, when you'll bless that favorable and happy hour when you let me go, and then you'll know—yes, you'll surely know how much I love you!"

And here Victor, tenderly clasping the hand extended to him, dropped a loving tear upon it. The paternal firmness could not resist such sincere affection, such touching tenderness. M. Morren threw his trembling arms around his son's neck and pressed him to his breast.

All this occurred the day before Joseph's departure; consequently there was not time enough for Victor to go to Schrambeck. But he hoped to be able to join his friends at Brussels where the train was to stop; so it was agreed he should start that evening.

Meanwhile, mother and son, their hands clasped in each others, silently tasted the sad joy of a last conversation, a last meeting. For poor Victor, too, it was a very trying moment; but a pure and earnest faith—and faith is strong enough to

overcome the weakness of finite perishable human love—animated and sustained his soul.

At length Victor, tremblingly, broke silence:

"Mother, it is time. At last we must part!"

The poor woman's hands for a moment shook with a painful trembling; then, controlling herself with a powerful effort, she replied in a calm, firm, but infinitely tender voice:

"Well, my dear child, my beloved Victor, may God's will be done! Let us separate, full of faith and confidence, like the early martyrs. And take this last *souvenir* from the mother who loves you."

Here she gave him her portrait, on the back of which she had traced with a firm hand these words: "Go, my son; obey the call of our God! May His angels watch over you every instant of your life. Fear nothing, my child, but God and sin. Pray for us all, and particularly your father. Pray for your mother, who blesses you from the bottom of her soul, who will constantly pray for you, and whose love, whose heart, whose thoughts will follow you unceasingly wherever you shall be. Your mother and friend, Rose Morren.—Mary, I confide my beloved child to you; preserve from all evil, I entreat you, his pure and innocent soul. Ask your Divine Son to deign to restore him to us, at least if such is His Divine will. But, above all, let my son ever remember the words of Queen Blanche to her royal pupil, and be happy to die rather than offend God."

"Oh! thanks, thanks, mother," cried Victor, deeply moved. "I'll never forget that advice in those noble words. This gift of your love will rest on my heart; it will surely protect me against the poniards and balls of the enemies of the Church; and if God grants me the grace of one day joyfully returning to embrace you, I will triumphantly deposit it in your hands as a glorious *souvenir* of the holy crusade."

"May God grant you that grace, child," cried the poor mother, sobbing; "but Victor, oh! Victor shall I see you again?"

"Let us hope so, mother. The Lord is omnipotent, and takes care of His own. Don't afflict yourself with vain alarms."

"No, my dear son; have no fears of me. I've already told you I'll not give way to a culpable despair, an unworthy weakness; and, even if the greatest of all sorrows should be reserved for me, God, I hope, will give me grace and strength to say that I am happy to be the mother of a martyr. No, my son, my vision will not be bounded by the narrow horizon of this short life; it will be elevated, if need be, to the pure regions of eternal light, to behold you triumphant at the foot of God's throne!"

"And now, mother," interrupted Victor, kneeling before her, "in the name of my father and yours, give me your blessing." And a tear gushed to the lad's eyes, as he thought of that absent father who had refused to bless him and follow him in his glorious enterprise with the eyes of faith and love.

The mother then raised her eyes to heaven, whence she sought strength and grace to calmly pronounce these solemn words, and, in a voice husky from deep emotion, said:

"May the Lord bless you as your mother blesses you, my beloved child! Fight valiantly for the cause of God and His Holy Church; remain faithful and devoted to the love of your Redeemer; faithful and devoted unto death if the Lord requires it; do all this, as I do it, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." And with her still trembling hand, the noble mother traces the sign of salvation on the pure brow of her son.

"Amen, amen!" sobbed Victor, and, having gone down into the kitchen to take leave of Barbara he rushed into the garden to give free vent to his tears.

Madame Morren followed her son to the door, and, in the midst of her tears gave him her last kiss and embrace. At length, the young man tore himself from her embrace, murmuring: "Farewell, dear, good mother; courage until we meet again. *Au revoir!*"

"Adieu, my dear child, adieu! May God's grace accom-

pany and protect you everywhere." And suffocated by her tears and overcome by emotion, she broke down at these words.

Then when he had disappeared at the turning of the streets, and she had kissed hands to him for the last time, she returned to her room, where, prostrate at the feet of the Immaculate Virgin she poured out all her heart's grief in a torrent of tears, and addressed the most fervent prayers to her for grace for her son to persevere to the end.

As Victor was going to the station, he was recognized by two strangers.

"I say Ernest, isn't that young Victor Morren?" asked one of them.

"Yes, indeed, it is he. He's going to the railway. Where can he be going, Maso?"

"*Per bacco!*" suddenly exclaimed the Carbonaro, bethinking himself, "isn't this the day that young Schrambeck fanatic was to set out for Rome? Mightn't Victor be going too?"

"He's simple enough to do so, I think. But it's easy enough for us to ascertain. Let us go at once to Morren's."

A few moments later they knocked at the door. Barbara, still weeping, hastened to open it.

"Is M. Morren at home?"

"No, gentlemen; he went to the country yesterday."

"And his son?"

"Alas! he left for Rome only a moment ago!" And, at these words, the poor servant shed a deluge of tears.

The two visitors feigned the profoundest sympathy, told her to give Madame Morren their most respectful compliments, and without waiting any longer went their way.

"*Maledetto Papalino!*" cried Maso, clenching his hand.

"He shall pay for it, Ernest; yes, he shall pay for it, I swear to you." And while he spoke, his eyes gleamed with hateful fury, like those of the tiger greedy of carnage and ready to fling itself on its timid prey.

As to Victor, when he rejoined the young Pontifical Volunteers at the Brussels Station the same evening, he was at once saluted with a chorus of joyful acclamations.

"Hurrah! hurrah! here's Victor," they cried in a transport of joy, surprise, and enthusiasm.

"Welcome!" repeated Joseph, joyfully, and moved even to tears. "My dear Victor, something told me you wouldn't abandon us here."

And the two young cousins, mustered under the standard of the same God, were clasped in a fraternal embrace.

CHAPTER VI.

ROME.

A few months had passed since the departure of the young volunteers. The Morrens had, as usual, retired for the summer to their beautiful seat at Schrambeck, where Madame Morren could observe the progress of her sister's convalescence.

Since Victor's departure, M. Morren was singularly reserved, dull and dejected, often passing whole days in his library, where no one was accustomed to intrude. He scarcely uttered a word to his wife when they met at meals; and even those he dropped were extremely few and frigid, and tinged with a secret bitterness.

It was certainly very painful for this loving spouse, this afflicted mother, to meet with nothing but coldness and injustice; but she was resolved to persevere to the end in her generous sacrifice, and strove to be calm and courageous, laying her burden and her cross every day at the bleeding feet of Christ and the Mother of Sorrows.

M. Morren, despite all, was too upright and generous at heart not to perceive the injustice, the folly of such conduct; so, when his irritation began to abate, when he gradually reassumed his customary calmness and moderation, he at once became more attentive and affectionate towards that noble and

patient wife who had never ceased to bear his coldness and injustice with the most amiable indulgence and the most perfect meekness.

It is true he had not once uttered Victor's name since the day of his departure. But let it not be imagined that the flame of paternal love was utterly extinguished in his soul. Although the proud reason of the *philosophe* was very far from avowing itself vanquished, there was a secret struggle between the restless solicitude of the father and the apparent indifference of the obstinate stoic. So, immediately after Victor's departure, M. Morren, without saying anything about it, had privately written to an artist friend in Rome, begging him to look after his son and send him news of him.

The husband and wife were scarcely two days installed in their Schrambeck residence when they already expected letters from our young volunteers. The villagers of Schrambeck shared the impatience of both families in this regard,

At length, one morning, at the very moment Madame Morren reached her sister's, the long-expected message arrived. It was a letter bearing the Roman post-mark.

With feverish impatience they tore open the envelope, and immediately two sheets of paper, covered with small close writing, dropped on the table. Victor, judging his parents had repaired to Schrambeck without delay, had joined his letter to his cousin's.

"We have just arrived in Rome," they wrote with filial alacrity, "and we don't like to let to-morrow morning's mail go out without hastily addressing you these lines, which will fully inform you of the principal details and incidents of our voyage. After quitting Paris on Tuesday evening, we reached Lyons on Wednesday morning, and Marseilles that evening. As there was no direct line, we had to go to Civita Vecchia by Leghorn, where we disembarked on Friday evening. As our vessel had to remain a day at anchor in the port, we availed ourselves of this delay to visit Leghorn. We had delightful weather going to Civita Vecchia, where we arrived on Saturday. Oh! what was our happiness, what joyful transports were ours, when at length we were permitted to tread that sacred soil so long the object of our dreams and our desires! We spontaneously flung ourselves on our knees to cover with kisses that sacred land as dear and as precious to us as Palestine was to the valorous Crusaders of yore! But we cannot describe to you the vivacity, the intensity of our rapture when, from the window of the train when traversing the banks of the Tiber, our eyes saw outlined against the blue sky first the grand basilica of St. Paul, then the noble old church of St. Mary-Major, and in fact most of the fine churches of Rome. We alighted at the Porta Portese, where we were received by a large number of our brave compatriots who had preceded us some months." "At that moment," continued Victor, "Tasso's fine verses describing the Crusaders' transports at the sight of the ramparts of Jerusalem occurred to me. Rome, our Jerusalem, lay at our feet, disclosed to our gaze, and I could find no other words to express the transports that filled our hearts than the words of the sublime poet :-

'Ecco apparer Gerusalem al vede,
Ecco additer Gerusalem al scorga;
Ecco da mille voci imitamento,
Gerusalemme salutar si sente.'

"But we mustn't forget that good Martin," continued the brave young fellows; "you can't think how happy he is. He says continually that now, for two thousand francs, he wouldn't wish to return to Belgium. The excellent lad is sometimes comical to the last degree, and has amused us prodigiously *en route*. When we asked him if he hadn't some message to send his mother, he promptly replied: 'Pray tell her that all's for the best; that I'm very well; that the twenty-five francs are still untouched, safe and sound.' When we asked him, on the way, what he thought of the cities we had passed through, he contented himself with replying: 'Bah! it seems to me I am at Liege or Antwerp. It is not such a great thing after all,

this journey to Rome. Really it costs no more than to wear out a pair of old shoes in walking.'"

The letter went on in this pleasant strain, which showed the happy dispositions of our young Zouaves, who concluded by promising very soon to send a longer letter, and requesting a prompt reply from their dear friends.

Victor, in a postscript addressed to his mother, had added: "Let me tell you, dear mother, that our separation, your absence, are and always will be very painful to me. Still, from the fervent desire that decided me, I draw an invincible strength, an ineffable consolation, and I thank the Lord, who has so paternally pointed out to me the way I should go, the sacrifice I was to make. Dear mother, may those same motives, those same hopes be your refuge and your consolation! Have no uneasiness on my account; don't afflict yourself; hope in Providence, and draw your courage from the same source whence I have drawn mine—in the thought of the holy duty it is given us to accomplish."

A few days after their arrival they were incorporated in a battalion of Zouaves but were allowed to remain some time at Rome to visit the principal monuments of that sacred city before joining their companions at the camp of Collescipoli.

Penetrating into the dark passages of the Catacombs—those glorious monuments of the heroic piety of the early Christians—in a transport of holy respect and tender fervor, he prostrated himself before the tombs of the martyrs who had bequeathed him their examples, and, in presence of their venerated relics, renewed the vow he had formed in consecrating like them his youth and his life to the defence of the faith.

One day, in the catacomb of St. Callistus, having knelt before the sepulchre of that glorious pontiff, he suddenly arose radiant and as it were transfigured. He thought he had seen those immortal martyrs arise from their tombs and, joyfully displaying their wounds and their crowns, pour upon his head and into his veins, with their benedictions, some rays of that celestial fire that, in the days of their earthly life, had animated them and guided them to the port.

Another day, accompanied by Joseph and Martin, he went to the basilica of St. Sebastian, where he prayed long and fervently, feeling inspired and doubly fortified at the remembrance of the heroic end of that glorious saint who of all others first merited the honorable title of the Defender of the Church.

His happiness was at length complete when he obtained audience of the common father of the faithful, the good and beloved Pius IX. With what tender emotion, with what joyful tears, he knelt to receive the benediction of that paternal hand to which the Lord had deigned to confide the keys of the kingdom of heaven! But his happiness was to be still greater, as this letter to his mother, written a few days later, shows;

"My dear mother, imagine, if you can, my joy and happiness; We—Joseph, Martin, and I—have just had audience of the Holy Father. Indeed I don't know how to give you an idea of his affectionate affability, his paternal kindness, and the deep impression his noble and saintly presence made on our hearts.

"It is to the obliging intervention of Mgr. S—— we owed, not only this inestimable favor of seeing and conversing with the Holy Father, but also an additional favor, a very special happiness, of which I shall presently have occasion to speak to you.

"We have been admitted to the presence of the Holy Father this evening. While Mgr. S—— preceded us to announce our hour of arrival to his Holiness, we remained in the ante-chamber a long superb gallery, crowded with domestic prelates, chaplains, almoners, &c., all clad in violet, like bish-

*The letters the author here attributes to the two cousins, Victor and Joseph, were really written, almost textually, by young Belgian Zouaves during their sojourn in Rome. Nothing has been taken from, nor added to Martin's words, which were uttered on a similar occasion by a brave and honest volunteer from a village of the Campine.

ops. I had a long conversation with one of them, who, besides his violet soutane, also wore a ring of the same color, and whom we naturally took for a bishop, titling him Monsignor all the time our conversation lasted, although he hadn't the pectoral cross. We afterwards asked the chaplain of St. Peter's the name of the worthy bishop with whom we chatted so long; he informed us that that prelate was simply one of his Holiness's chamberlains, and we were much amused at this innocent mistake.

"A few moments after Mgr. S——came out of the inner apartment and invited us to follow him into the presence of the Holy Father. At that instant we were seized with a sudden and violent emotion; one might have heard the hurried beatings of our hearts, which trembled at once with dread and pleasure. We were then introduced into a small adjoining chamber, furnished with the greatest simplicity, and, after having accomplished all the prescribed ceremonies, at length found ourselves at the feet of the good and noble Pius IX. I can't describe to you the supreme, profound emotion that overmastered us at that solemn moment. O mother, I am now amply recompensed for the anguish and bitterness of my sacrifice.

"The Holy Father, after having permitted us to kiss the ring he usually wears on his finger, tapped us gently on the shoulder, saying, with a paternal smile:

"Well, my dear Zouaves, you are all Belgians, I suppose?"

"Yes, Holy Father," I answered, "and our families have sent us here to throw ourselves at your Holiness's feet, and assure you of our profound sentiments of respect and affection, and devotion to the holiest of causes."

"The Holy Father then interrogated us with a solicitude thoroughly amiable and paternal, speaking to us of our country, our friends, our parents. He appeared deeply moved when he learned that Joseph had made a vow to serve him to obtain from heaven his mother's cure. As for me, I spoke to him of you, my good mother, and of my father also; he then promised me to pray for you both.

"But when we had delivered to him poor Teresa's offering (for Martin, in his simplicity, wanted to put the purse into his hands the moment we had entered the room together), a tear glistened in his eyes, and he exclaimed with a voice of emotion:

"This is truly the widow's mite, and who would have the courage to refuse it? But, my children," he continued, "it is quite necessary that I should do something in turn, to worthily recognise your devotion and your faithful affection. Stay; here's a little *souvenir* I charge you to transmit, in my name, to your parents."

"And speaking thus, he gave us three gold medals.

"But," he resumed an instant after, addressing Joseph, "I forgot that you have a sister. Stay, my son; here's something for her, too." It was a beautiful mother-of-pearl rosary, which Joseph no doubt will send to Schrambeck.

"He still continued, for some moments, to speak to us of our dear and beautiful country, for which he has told us he has always had a deep affection. After that I ventured to make known to him our dearest and most fervent desire, which until then we had not dared to manifest, fearing to importune the Holy Father.

"Holy Father," I said, "we would wish to solicit a very precious favor from your kindness. Could we have the happiness of receiving Holy Communion from your hands, and in that way obtain the graces and benedictions of the Lord for our present enterprise?"

"Assuredly," he replied. "Be at Mass in my chapel to-morrow morning. How could I ever refuse anything to my dear Zouaves."

"Holy Father," we all answered with one accord, "we are profoundly grateful to you for all these proofs of interest and paternal kindness, and we hope in return, with the help of God, to be able to serve you as becomes good and loyal Belgians—that is to say, as true, and devoted soldiers of Christ."

"Then the Holy Father blessed us again, and even deigned to bless some beads and medals we had brought with us; after which he permitted us once more to kiss his ring, and we left the chamber. But suddenly a chamberlain hurried after me, and said the Holy Father desired to speak with me alone.

"Would you believe it, my dear mother, his paternal glance had read my soul, he had discovered, divined my secret—that secret, I confided to you in the garden before my departure, and which so deeply moved your Christian heart. And his eyes were now humid, and his tender and emotional voice had a prophetic tone when he murmured in my ear, while I prostrated myself before him:

"Go in peace, my son; the Lord is with you; you have strength and love on your side. The peril is great, perhaps, but the work is noble and holy, and you will triumph!"

"O mother! mother! those words of hope and consolation since then constantly resound in my ears. Was it not our Lord Himself who deigned to speak to me by the voice of His minister and representative on earth?

"It is impossible for me to describe to you here the sentiments of joy, gratitude and ecstasy that filled our hearts after this visit to the Holy Father. Martin, the simplest and least eloquent among us, was the one who knew, however, how to express them in the sublimest manner when he answered at the moment when, traversing the Vatican, we wanted him to admire all those marvels of art and nature: 'It's little I care about that now! All I desire more is to see the Holy Father again, to receive Communion from his hands, and then die for him. In that case I hope the good God will consent to call me straight to heaven.'

"Surely he was right—our brave and honest Martin. And assuredly we are very happy in having seen our well-beloved Pius IX. to-day, in having conversed with him like children with their father; and to receive to-morrow the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ from his paternal hand.

"Will our compatriot's wish be one day accomplished? I don't know; but in any case I hope, my good mother, that you still feel courageous enough to be the mother of a martyr, if God, in His wisdom, should have so decreed it.

"And now, farewell, dear mother; I must prepare to receive my Redeemer to-morrow. You know well my most fervent prayers will be for you, for your consolation, for your happiness and my father's."

Victor, having finished his letter, was thinking of the great joy, the inestimable favor that awaited him with the first glimpse of morning, when he fell into a sweet, peaceful sleep. But this sleep was soon troubled by agitated dreams,—by a strange vision!

The young man saw stretching before him, farther than his eye could reach, a limitless ocean, whose giant waves, swollen and agitated by the breath of a powerful storm, rose hoarse-responding to the clouds of heaven, scattering everywhere dread, destruction and death! Naked rocks, dark and dangerous, lifted their menacing ridges high over the troubled waters; huge fierce birds flew along the crests of the billows, and enormous marine monsters, with scaly backs and confused and horrible forms, raised their gaping mouths above the surface of the waves in the hope of gulping down the unfortunate shipwrecked mariners who were to be the sport of this horrible tempest.

Still in that vast chaos of light and darkness, clouds and foam, a noble vessel floated, cleaving the roaring waters and preserving in its course a sovereign tranquillity and indescribable majesty. Despite the fury of the winds and the mighty wrath of the waves, it traced, in the midst of the sombre rocks, its broad and luminous track as it might have done on the bosom of some beautiful blue lake on a peaceful summer evening. One had said that all the mariners who manned it were tranquilly sleeping, for none of them was seen in the lofts or rigging; the majestic vessel seemed to steer, bend and move of its own accord without anybody's help. However, calm and solitary, a man was seated at the rudder; it was a venerable old man, whose features, at once august and gracious, very closely re-

sembled those Victor had admired that very day on the noble countenance of the common father of the faithful, and which had made such a profound and lasting impression on his mind. The young man was not slow to perceive that he himself was on board this majestic vessel, sheltered from all danger, in company with some friends and his beloved mother. But, oh terror! in casting a glance of horror and pity on that tumultuous chaos, on those foaming waves, he sees, faint, inanimate and half swallowed down, a castaway whom the angry waves at one time poise on their crests at another clasp in their sinuous coils and suck down into their whirlpools, while around him the monsters of the abyss grind their sharp teeth, their gnashing jaws, and make ready to devour him. * * * O powers, O decrees of heaven! That miserable wretch is his father!

The courageous Victor has uttered a cry of anguish, and already he has launched—plunged in the midst of the waves.

He struggles with all the strength of despair against the waves, the winds, and the sea monsters. The screaming birds of prey wheel before his eyes and over his head, the monsters of the deep set upon him furiously, rending and bearing away strips of flesh from his body; still he struggles on. A few more struggles, another effort, and he will have saved his father. . . . Alas! a gigantic wave, breaking over him, flings him back. His strength fails him; an icy shudder shakes his exhausted limbs; already the cold hand of death seems to clasp him and drag him down into the abyss. . . . He has resolved, however, to conquer or to die. Courage, forward! forward! At last—at last—he has rejoined, he has seized his father! But the unfortunate old man struggles against him, writhes convulsively, and seems to want to draw him with him into the depths of the gulf. Victor, poor Victor, shall you then be vanquished in that supreme combat of devotion and love? No, the heroic child has cast a prayerful glance towards the noble vessel; he sees his weeping mother pointing to heaven with a radiant countenance, and the divine pilot turns towards him and smiles. Then he utters a cry, murmurs a prayer, and imploring heaven's succor, makes a last effort. . . . At last he has succeeded in raising the old man in his arms and drawing him out of the reach of the hungry monsters seeking to tear him to pieces. . . . He has regained the vessel—he has placed the poor castaway in the arms of his joyful, weeping mother—and falls fainting, exhausted, dying at the feet of the divine pilot, who, at that moment, gives him his last blessing. The hand of death is on him, but his father is saved!

And then, as dusky vapors mingle with the splendor of a golden sky, the mournful images of the dream vanished in the midst of a calm sweet sleep. But was it indeed Victor, but a vain dream, a fleeting vision, that at that hour could thus disturb you?

CHAPTER VII.

THE CARBONARO.

One fine summer evening, several young girls of the Trastevere had come to draw water from the fountain Paulina, called by the Romans Fontana di San Pietro in Montorio. Laughing, gossiping and sporting together, they did not seem in the least hurry to finish their task and go home. One of them was remarkable for her regular and energetic features and large dark brown eyes, which seemed to indicate rare and firm courage; she looked as if she had not counted more than fifteen summers, and her companions called her Nunziata.

But the eldest of the young girls were chiefly occupied in telling the news of the day, and babbled joyously, like so many swallows."

"Do you know what has happened to that brave Pietro Marini?" said Giannina, the gravest.

"No, indeed. Tell us, Nina," cried several voices.

"You know him well—that worthy, honest man," she re-

plied. "Well, suddenly, a few days ago he had the misfortune to lose his horse; and it was impossible for him to do his business without the help of that poor beast."

"Oh! yes, yes, Pietro Marini, I remember him well," here cried Carlotta, one of the youngest little girls of the group. "He's a poor man who sells sand, and brings it in on old cart."

"That's him, just," said Nina; "but before calling him 'poor,' wait for the end of the story. Pietro, as I've told you, was, as well as his wife, plunged in profound grief owing to that loss, when all at once, starting up joyfully, and, in his excitement, giving himself a thump in the head, he said bluntly: 'Maddalena, I was a fool to annoy myself so.' And as she regarded him with satisfaction: 'Yes, it's just as I say,—I'm but a fool,' he pursued. 'Don't you know, and didn't I know too, that we've an excellent neighbor here—the Holy Father? And he doesn't want for horses, and he'll not refuse me one if I ask him. Quick, give me my Sunday clothes. He's so good, they say—I'm going to see him, to speak to him at once, and you'll see, Maddalena, if I don't bring back a horse.'"

"And did he really go there?" interrupted Ursula, one of the youngest girls.

"I believe so. He went straight to the Vatican—but as you may well think, they stopped him at the gates. Nevertheless, our brave man was not discouraged at such a little thing. 'I must speak to the Holy Father!' he cried. 'I must converse with him at once and treat with him on an important subject.' Now these words of Pietro weren't long in drawing the attention of a Monsignor who, passing close by, had already remarked the brave man on account of his confident bearing and his frank, honest face. The prelate asked him why he desired to be admitted to the Vatican. 'I'll very willingly explain the matter to you,' he replied. And, without waiting to be pressed, he immediately related the misfortune that had happened to him, and the idea he had of imploring the Holy Father's aid on that occasion. 'It was an excellent idea,' replied the worthy prelate. 'I'll transmit your request to the Sovereign Pontiff, and I'll do my best to influence him in your favor! Return to-morrow, my child, and I hope to have the happiness of announcing to you the success of your humble request.' Pietro, as you may imagine, did not wait to be told twice. The next day he was at his post, hopeful and joyful, and the good Pius IX., touched to the heart by the faithful confidence his neighbor testified towards him, not only sent him a horse out of his stables, but also a good sum of money to help him to harness it. Now, I leave you to think if Pietro was proud and content. He sprang with a bound on the beautiful horse, a glorious present from the Holy Father, and triumphantly riding through the Trastevere, shouted: '*Teviva Pio Nono!* He has given me a horse out of his own stable!'"

"The Holy Father is really very good," observed a Trasteverina named Julia—"particularly to little ones and the poor. One day, accompanied by a single prelate, he took a walk outside the gates of the city, when he met a simple peasant going along quite joyfully, making great strides and munching a big piece of black bread under his teeth. 'Good day, my son,' said the Holy Father, at once pleased with the frank and open countenance of the honest countryman. The latter, too busy with his mouth full to answer, nodded familiarly and passed on. But, lo! at a turning on the road he suddenly perceives a handsome carriage with liveried lackeys and two of the Holy Father's chamberlains. 'Surely,' he said to himself, 'it must be the Pope.' And, without losing time he throws himself on his knees and cries out with all his might, 'If you're the Holy Father, pray give me your benediction.' And Pius IX., at once understanding the good man's words, turns aside and very graciously gives him his blessing."

At these words Julia broke off and Ursula suddenly cried out:

"Look! here's a foreign Zouave walking with a gentleman!

1 This trait of the Sovereign Pontiff's beneficence is several years posterior to the epoch to which our story refers; but the reader will pardon this innocent anachronism.

See what a handsome soldier, and what a noble dignified, courageous air he has?"

Nunziata, turning round, joyfully exclaimed:

"Long live the Zouaves, those generous and valiant defenders of the Holy Father!"

But hardly had she glanced at the young Zouave and his young companion than, without even waiting to bid adieu to her companions or stooping to lift up the pitcher left near the fountain, she dashed off rapidly in the direction of the narrow streets adjoining the Trastevere, where she instantly disappeared.

It was Victor Morren, accompanied by Maso di Roccabianca, who thus attracted the notice of the young girls. They seemed to be coming from the Lungera quarter and going in the direction of the Porta San Pancrazio. The young Romans, grouped under the shadow of the arches, followed them for a moment with their eyes, and then promptly resumed their pleasant chat.

"But why did Nunziata fly away so hastily?" observed Carlotta. "See, she was in such a hurry, that she has forgotten her pitcher near the basin."

"Who can know what's on her mind?" replied Giannia. "She's a singular child, that Nunziata. At one time she's pensive, grave, and almost sad; at another she's gossiping and singing, laughing and joking. Really I could never understand her."

"Yes, indeed, she's a strange creature" said Julia. "Sometimes she's as meek and kind as an angel, and at other times rash, irritable, and untractable as a demon. You remember at the last fire that took place in the Trastevere, how courageously she rushed into the midst of the flames and burning ruins, where even men did not dare to venture, afraid of sacrificing their lives, and, at the danger of hers, succeeded in saving a poor little child whose parents had perished, devoured by the flames. And with what glad affection, what loving emotion she afterwards pressed the dear little innocent to her heart, as a sister, a mother would have done!"

"Do I remember?" retorted Carlotta—"I should think so; I saw the child last Sunday walking with her. She placed it in the orphanage of the Immaculate Conception, where she had it maintained at her own expense. The poor little child loves her beyond anything and calls her his mother. You should see her dance with joy when he gives her that name!"

Just at this moment a young man quitting the Trastevere passed by the fountain, making for the Porta San Pancrazio in all haste.

"Stay!" resumed Julia; "there's Stefano, Nunziata's brother. What can he have to do at this hour outside the gates of the city that he should be hurrying so? Really, one would think he was running for his life."

All this time Victor and his companion, conversing uninterruptedly, had passed the Porta San Pancrazio and were rambling in the direction of the Via Vitellia. Maso had met the young Pontifical volunteer in the Lungara, and had cordially shaken hands with him. He came from Belgium, he said, anxious to revisit his country, whose dearest interests were actually at stake. At the same time he had not told Victor that for two days he had been looking for him in every corner of Rome. But he feigned a lively interest and deep sympathy for the young stranger, and hastened to give him news of his friends at Antwerp whom he had recently quitted.

"And where do you intend going now?" he asked.

"I purposed visiting the Church of San Pancrazio to-day," responded Victor,

"I'm delighted," said Maso, "It will be a real pleasure to accompany you. There is a delightful walk to it. I'll show you, on the way, the Vascellos and the Villa Corsini, where the French opened a way to the ramparts of Rome in 1849. Besides we can talk more at leisure of your country and your family."

Victor could not expect to find very much pleasure in Maso's society; nevertheless, he received him cordially, and they both

began their walk.

"What's become of my father?" he asked. "How is he?"

"His health is always good, but he's really inconsolable at your departure. Listen to me, Victor," resumed Maso, after a moment, and with apparent hesitation; "your father gave me a message for you, in case I should meet you; but, truly, I don't know whether it's right to make —"

"Don't let anything embarrass you; speak frankly," the generous young man at once interposed.

"Well, since you wish it, pray don't be annoyed with me then, and believe me that, in acting thus, I'm guided only by the interest I have in yourself, your respectable father, and all your family. Your father, conquered by your entreaties, at last allowed you to take service in the Pontifical army; but after your departure, after seriously reflecting on the subject of your resolution, he charged me with speaking to you in his name, and sparing no efforts to get you to renounce this deplorable determination."

Now Maso, in speaking thus, was guilty of an odious and flagrant imposture. Since Victor's departure he had not exchanged a single word with M. Morren, then at his Schambeck villa. So Victor was by no means convinced of the truth of this assertion.

"Monsieur di Roccabianca" he replied, "I don't believe my father ever retracts his word solemnly given; such conduct would be in direct opposition to his principles, his acts, his entire life. Besides I would dishonor and despise myself if I were ever capable of failing in my engagement. No, Maso, nothing could ever make me betray my duty; my father himself wouldn't wish I should break my oath in so shameful a manner. Spare yourself then the trouble of urging it any longer you'll never persuade me."

"But, my friend," replied Maso, who was resolved to draw away Victor by his perfidious arguments, or, in case all his ruses should fail, to wreak upon him, the ferocious vengeance he had so long pondered—"but, my friend, how can you feel yourself engaged by a decision taken haphazard, in haste, in complete ignorance of the situation, the circumstances, the cause you had embraced? Don't you see how this cause is unworthy of you, unworthy of the constancy and devotion of brave men? Don't you perceive, in fact, that our age of progress and enlightenment is thoroughly resolved to bear no longer the tyrannous and odious yoke the Papacy imposes on the ancient city of the proud Romans, a free people?"

"Listen to me, Maso," here interrupted Victor, flushed with anger, indignation and disdain; "the subject to which you have just alluded is one that cannot be discussed between us; the words you have uttered profane and sully this august and justly blessed land. The glorious cause I defend is the cause of my conscience, the cause of all Catholicity, in brief, the cause of my God!"

"A very glorious cause, indeed!" retorted the Carbonaro, with an ironical smile—"that of a decrepit old man, a few bigoted monks, and some credulous or idiotic women. What honor will you owe it, if you die for it? With what glory would it crown you even if it triumphed—which it never will? Do you wish to embrace a noble and a just cause, to exhibit a sublime and generous devotion? Fight for Italy. It is a grand and noble cause, that of a people breaking its chains; it is the cause of liberty opposed to the cause of slavery. Follow me, Victor; join those generous and intrepid combatants who came from all parts to do battle and triumph in holy patriotic combats; cast away from you fanaticism and error, those vain idols of your fathers; break the shameful bonds of that gross superstition in which a fatal education has too long enchained you. You have a grand and generous soul, a soul capable of understanding and appreciating the sublimity of such an aim, the beauty of such devotion. Come then, abandon those crumbling altars, those decrepit dogmas; hasten to range yourself under the flag of Italy to be revived at our sides by the breath of liberty!"

"Enough!" replied Victor, in a firm voice, interrupting the tempter with a motion of the hand; "believe me, I know those

Garibaldian bands thoroughly; I estimate them at their just value. I consider, then, as an insult, any proposal designed to engage me to join those *adventurers* and *condottieri* of our epoch, half soldiers, half bandits. Enough! I tell you; you have perhaps spoken without a bad intention. Such solicitations are, nevertheless, enough to bring the blush of shame to my face."

At these words the irritated Carbonaro bit his lips so angrily that his blood tinged his white teeth clinched with rage. Then he slipped his hand under his coat as if looking for a weapon; but the road they were then walking on doubtless did not appear to him deserted enough for the accomplishment of his vengeance; so he pursued with apparent calmness:

"Very well, sir, let there be no more talk about it. Believe me, however, I had no intention of offending you. Haven't I told you at the outset, that my interest and sympathy in yourself as well as your respectable parents was my sole and only motive?"

"I believe so" replied Victor, "but you are strangely mistaken if you think that earthly honor, that fleeting, fragile and contemptible glory, of which you spoke to me just now, is the sacred end to which I aspire, the motive that determined me to this resolution. Other careers more peaceable, more brilliant, in which I wouldn't have to sacrifice my blood, my life, are open to me; but I have preferred sacrificing my whole future, all my hopes, to the august and sacred cause for which I have offered myself, and I will gladly persist in this supreme resolution, even if shame and death were to be my only reward here, for I should have at least confessed my faith and satisfied my conscience,—and my conscience and my faith are the sole judges at the tribunal to which I am summoned."

A profound silence followed this solemn avowal. Victor had ceased to speak, and, absorbed in his thoughts, kept his eyes fixed on the ground. As to the guilty Maso, he knit his dark brows, and his eyes, riveted on his young companion, seemed to dart flames.

There was a lonely, silent country around them; not a murmur, not a sound—no breath of wind waving the branches, no sweet song of birds among the leaves, no cricket chirping among the tall grass; nothing but a deep, sinister silence. Our two promenaders had left the Vascello and the Villa Corsini behind; and without Victor perceiving it, had quitted the high road and penetrated into a solitary path which Maso knew well.

They were approaching a dense copse where the young trunks grew thickly, and the branches interlaced. Suddenly a light breeze made the leaves gently rustle, and then died away without leaving a trace, like the icy breath, the last sigh of one dying. And that faint sound gone, everything relapsed into silence.

"Listen, Victor," resumed Maso in a strange accent, and designedly laying stress upon his words, as it were to give them a sinister significance. "Listen to me. There's nothing before you but defeat and death if you persist in this deplorable disastrous design. Poor dupe that you are," he continued, with a disdainful smile, "how could you have thus abandoned your father and your country to die unknown and dishonored, in some forgotten corner of this foreign land."

"Maso, Maso, stop, be silent," cried the incensed Victor. "You blaspheme, you insult the Divine Majesty audaciously; you make me blush with shame and indignation for you. Know well that that death with which you threaten me in your blind rage has no terrors for me, for I am prepared for it, ever since the day God inspired me with this pious resolution. I shall behold it as a benefactress, as a friend supporting on its wings those green palms of victory, a thousand times more pleasing and more glorious than all the crowns lavished on earthly conquerors. Far from me such weakness; far from me such terrors! Who could fear to die fighting for the holy cause of God and the Church?"

"Well," cried Maso, no longer restraining his fury, "as you wish it, here is that benefactress, that friend! She'll

not keep you long waiting, wretched fanatic, pitiful maniac. It is come at length, the hour of thy death with the hour of my vengeance!"

And before the astonished Victor had time to defend himself, the robust arm of the Carbonaro had seized him and clasped him in its iron grasp.

The young volunteer, however, did not lose his bravery and self-possession. He had first grown pale, but at once raised his eyes to heaven as it were to offer his last sacrifice to God.

"Ah! accursed," continued the Carbonaro, "I haven't returned in vain to this fatal city. If I've consented to come, it was because I hoped to rejoin thee, to be revenged! Die, coward! die, maniac! and may all the enemies of Italy perish like thee!"

And Maso raised his arm, and over the young Zouave's head flashed the glittering blade of a poniard.

But a cry of pain and distress suddenly resounded along the path, and the terrified Carbonaro let his arm fall.

"Gennaro, Gennaro!" cried the voice, drawing near, and assuming a beseeching tone.

"Who calls me?" murmured the assassin. "Who's here, then, that knows my name? Who dares name Gennaro without dreading his vengeance?"

Suddenly, as if in answer to his question, a man with dishevelled hair, dusty clothes and flashing eyes, emerged from the thicket and met his gaze, arriving at the supreme moment like a messenger of fear and justice. This man was Stefano, Nunziato's brother.

At the sight of him the Carbonaro grew dreadfully pale, and trembled all over, as if a thunderbolt, hurled by the hand of God, struck him.

"Stefano," he murmured in a feeble voice, "Stefano, is it really you? How did you come here?"

"Gennaro," answered the new-comer. "At least I see you still recognize me. Whatever power has guided my foot-steps, I'm fortunately come in time to spare you a crime. Gennaro, are all traces of that blood clinging to your hands then effaced, that already you're thinking of soiling them with a second murder?"

The guilty Maso—or Gennaro, for henceforward we know him under his real name—seemed totally disarmed, humiliated, vanquished by the voice of that stranger who thus spoke so bitterly to him. His still flashing eyes were confusedly averted, then fixed on the ground; it was easy to see some secret influence arrested and overpowered the blind fury that boiled in his breast.

As to Victor, scarcely had the vigorous arm of the assassin relaxed its grasp, when he fell upon his knees, thanking God with all his heart for his sudden deliverance. Then he regarded with surprise the strange and unexpected scene before him. He could not understand by what singular chance—if indeed there was really nothing but chance in all this—this unknown liberator had appeared so suddenly, and just at the supreme moment, nor what were the circumstances that gave this stranger such a mysterious influence over the mind of the assassin.

Meanwhile Stefano conversed rapidly with the Carbonaro in a mixed dialect utterly unknown to Victor. He spoke with evident solicitation, entreaty, and, at the same time, authority which did not prevent him lowering his voice and gazing anxiously around him, as if he feared some one in the depth of the thicket could have overheard him. As to Gennaro he only murmured in an irritated undertone some words that did not appear to calm Stefano's indignation. The latter at length—this time in Italian, without being any longer afraid that Victor would overhear him replied:

"Well, let it be so, as you wish it, God knows, despite all, I don't desire your ruin and your shame. Only, listen to me and don't despise my advice. Quit Rome immediately, or else I declare, Gennaro, nothing shall restrain me. If to-morrow's sun shall find you under our wall, neither the affection that the laws of nature inspire me with towards you, nor the thought of the dishonor that would fall on our name, shall

prevent me denouncing you and delivering you up to justice. And now," continued Stefano with a mournful glance, "if nothing in your heart awakens you to repentance or moves you to weep for your crimes, may I have seen you for the last time on earth or in heaven. Farewell, farewell, Gennaro; let us separate without any further delay. Here's your road."

And, with a gesture of authority, he pointed to the pathway leading to the Porta Portese, then made a sign to Victor and walked before him along the road which, turning in an opposite direction, led them back to the city.

For some moments Victor and his courageous guide observed a profound silence; but scarcely had they emerged on the high-road than Victor, seizing the hand of the brave Stefano, pressed it respectfully to his lips.

"Oh, my noble liberator!" he cried, "how can I ever thank you for your kindness?"

"What's the good of speaking of those things, Signor," replied the brave young man. "I have only done my duty; and, believe me, I am sufficiently rewarded by the thought of having been fortunate enough to prevent a murder."

"I shall do as you please," Victor quietly responded, "but nothing shall prevent me vowing a sincere friendship, a lively gratitude towards you. But by what mysterious and divine will of Providence were you there precisely at the instant when a crime was to be prevented, and how comes it—supposing, however, my question is not indiscreet—that my adversary who, for many years, has habitually resided in Belgium, is so intimately known to you?"

"It was indeed an inspiration of Divine Providence that led me to that place," replied Stefano. "Know then, Signor, that your perfidious enemy is none other than my own brother, a real prodigal son, who has long overwhelmed us with shame and sorrow. Judge then, after that, if I ought to esteem myself happy—despite the profound grief his unworthiness causes me—at having arrived in time to save him a crime! O my poor, dear brother, we have known him before to be honorable and virtuous, but the fatal influence of some treacherous friends, and particularly that of bad societies he frequented but too often, led him astray, corrupted him, and brought him to ruin. Then terrible occurrences, leaving traces of mourning and sorrow in our memory that will never be effaced, compelled the unfortunate fellow to abandon his country. For many years his fate was unknown to us, and we were not aware of his return to the country, to the Eternal City, until to-day, by God's visible permission, my sister Nunziata saw him passing with you near the Paulina fountain, where she had tarried. Although she was still quite a child when he left us, she recognized him in a moment, for in our happy days our little Nunziata was Gennaro's favorite, and those sad years passed in error and crime could not have so changed our brother's features that it would be impossible to recognize them when they were forever engraven on one's memory. But, having seen Gennaro in company with a Pontifical volunteer, Nunziata felt immediately moved by a fatal presentiment, and hastened to return home to tell me what she had seen. I instantly felt it my duty to follow you, hoping to find an opportunity of conversing with my brother, to whom I wished to speak alone. But when I saw you quit the high-road and disappear with Gennaro into the thicket, a profound terror seized me and I bounded after you. You know the rest, Signor; it was the hand of God saved you!"

"It guided yours, my friend," replied Victor effusively. "It is to you I owe safety, life deliverance. O Stefano, how can I ever repay you? Let me at least speak to you, heart to heart, as to an old friend. And, if you like, Stefano, we'll pray together for your unhappy brother."

Stefano wept. It was a good, true Christian he had had the happiness of saving; he saw it clearly then, for the true servants of Christ alone are capable of pitying, loving, succoring those who persecute them. In his emotion the words died away on his lips, but his heart beat tenderly, and he pressed Victor's hands.

"O thanks, thanks!" he murmured, drying his tears.

"Your good words restore calmness and hope to me, and pour balm into my heart."

Then, as they drew near the city, clasping each other's hands, they observed a profound silence.

The church of San Pietro in Montorio rose before them in the shadow; they entered to pour out before God the gratitude and love with which their hearts were animated. Both knelt before the altar of the Virgo della Lettera. Stefano prayed for his brother; Victor implored God's grace and pardon for his enemy, and, mindful of the peril that menaced him, returned thanks to Providence.

Meanwhile Gennaro had fled, blasphemy on his lips, rage in his heart. In his fury he multiplied his mad maledictions and exclamations, raising his hand to heaven as if to threaten God himself.

"The coward has escaped me this time;" he cried at last, stopping exhausted, his forehead bathed in perspiration, his eyes glaring, "but I'll meet him again, and destiny, I'm confident, will not always protect him. Forward, forward, on my fatal road! Courage; I'll meet him again. Thou wilt have thy revenge, Gennaro, before hell claims thee!"

And his infernal laughter resounded in the evening stillness like the dismal chuckling of a damned soul!

Then, as if he had taken a sudden resolution, he continued his way in the direction of the Porta Portese. All at once, at a turning in the road, a young girl rushing on hastily found herself before him.

"Gennaro!" she cried.

"Nunziata!" he repeated, for he had recognized his sister by the sound of her voice.

"Gennaro, have you seen Stefano—have you spoken to him?"

"Have I spoken to him!" he replied, transported with rage at that name, at the recollection of his brother. "Back, Nunziata! all is henceforth broken off, all is ended between us. Stefano has baffled me, he has snatched away my revenge from me. He has threatened, in his stupid anger, to bring shame, exile, and death upon me."

"Wretch!" cried Nunziata, "I wasn't deceived! You were going to shed innocent blood! Your confiding victim trusted himself to you! Gennaro, Gennaro, have you stifled forever the voice of your conscience! That bleeding, livid shadow—that shadow you knew so well—does it never rise before you? Does it never trouble your dreams?"

"Back, back, mad girl!" interrupted the Carbonaro transported with fury. "Let me pass, Nunziata, or I'll crush you beneath my feet, to chastise you for your insolence."

But, at this threat, the courageous child, in place of recoiling, dashed before him, exasperated, indomitable, like a lioness caught in a snare.

"Courage!" she cried with all the intrepidity, all the noble ardor of a Roman maiden. "Courage! Now raise your hand to your sister! I'm not afraid of you, Gennaro, and you shall hear me to the end, despite your fury and all your threats!"

"Once more, back! away maniac!" he stammered, rudely shoving her aside and throwing her down on the road. "Go, tell that stupid Stefano, who has robbed me of my revenge, to beware, if he will, of the consequences of the hatred I henceforth bear him."

"Hate me, too, then;" replied the courageous girl at once rising, "for it was I who first robbed you of your revenge. God knows that in crossing your path, I had no wish but to touch your soul; but I see, wretched brother, that your heart is closed to me. Your hour is not yet come. Alas! when will it come?"

"Yes, when will it come then—the hour of revenge!" he repeated, as he walked away from her.

"Wretched being, it is not that I await; it is the hour of salvation, the hour of grace," she replied, heaving a deep sigh. "O, Gennaro, Gennaro, formerly you loved me so much! In the name of the happy past, in the name of our old affection, recall to what end I speak these words, I address to you this prayer:—By your regrets, by your repentance forestall the

hour of justice, were it only a single moment !”

And she stretched out her hands towards him, weeping bitterly. But the guilty one did not deign to listen to her, and sad and solitary she returned to her dwelling in the city. She had scarcely entered when Stefano and Victor appeared.

“Alas ! brother, I’ve spoken to him, but he would listen to nothing,” she cried. “Oh ! my God, my God ! is there no more hope for him ? Pardon, pardon, Signor,” she stammered, perceiving at Stefano’s side the young foreign Zouave, at whose feet she threw herself, blushing and confused.

“Pray, rise, Signorina,” responded Victor, painfully moved by this humble attitude, those passionate demonstrations. “Don’t I owe my safety to your brother here ?”

“Alas ! he too—he’s my brother,” she murmured, bending low and blushing deeper.

“And he is also mine,” replied Victor. “He’s a stray brother for whose return we will constantly pray with our whole soul.”

At these tender words the astonished Nunziata glanced earnestly at the young Christian soldier. No threatening cloud, no perceptible expression of rancor or anger darkened Victor’s brow, and his frank open visage, breathed nothing but love and pity, generous indulgence, and divine mercy. Nunziata, to get a better look at him, wiped away her tears for a moment.

“O, Signor, you’re an angel,” she cried, sobbing.

“Alas ! I’m very far from resembling those pure spirits of heaven,” he replied, with a gentle, modest smile. “And don’t call me ‘Signor,’ I beg, but simply Victor, for I earnestly desire that you and Stefano should regard me as a brother. True, in a few days my duty summons me to the camp rather far from Rome ; but I shall certainly return, and I do hope I shall then be treated by you as one of the family. You’ll grant me that favor, won’t you, dear Stefano ?”

The young Italian’s only reply was a warm pressure of the hand extended to him. Victor was not long without meeting true friends in this new land.

Out of regard for this amiable family as well as compassion for the wretched maniac, the young Pontifical volunteer only disclosed the dramatic circumstances in which he thought he would have lost his life to his cousin Joseph and the faithful Martin, who both promised to have a watchful eye to his safety.

The next day Victor received a long letter from his mother, who said that for some days she had remarked a strange and extremely satisfactory change in her husband’s conduct. M. Morren had pointedly betrayed, in every thing that concerned his son, a deep estrangement, or, at least, complete indifference ; but, suddenly, he seemed to have reverted to better sentiments, and impatiently asked to see Victor’s letters to his mother. Then he recommended his wife to write immediately to Victor and request a prompt reply, warning his son to carefully avoid the company of Maso if he met him, “for the latter,” he added, “intends to injure my poor child.”

Victor, overjoyed at receiving such pleasant news, hastened to answer his dear parents, in order to dispel all their disquietude, and, (without, however, informing them of the danger he had run) completely reassured them in his regard ; for all Maso’s projects, he told them, had come to nothing and evaporated in smoke.

But how had M. Morren been led to suddenly conceive such a lively solicitude in regard to his son ? And who could have informed him of the sinister projects of the Carbonaro, who had not announced his departure to him, and besides would have taken care not to disclose his reason for going to Rome ?

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SPIRIT OF GOOD AND THE SPIRIT OF EVIL.

The old castle of Schrambeck, of which we have spoken at the outset of this story, is an antique and venerable remnant of the splendors of the Middle Ages.

It is a vast quadrangular building, flanked, at each of its angles, by a large round tower, joined by a wing, in the center of the facade, with a fifth tower, an immense formidable structure that looks like the eternal sentinel of the old château, overlooking the approaches and defending the entrance. A large moat nearly surrounds the vast and gloomy edifice ; a very lofty crenulated and turreted wall completing the line of defence. The rusty vanes, half bent on their rods, creak on the tops of the turrets ; the old oaken doors are bending on their hinges ; the walls are falling in in many places ; and the tall weeds, sown by the breath of the tempest, wave their green leaves from the base of the posterns to the summit of the battlements. A portion of the old edifice is already a heap of ruins ; and time, which is doing its work, will not be slow to destroy what remains.

Some time before the events related in the preceding chapter, M. Morren and his friend, Ernest Van Dormael, were taking a walk towards the close of day, along the hills to the north-west of Schrambeck. Ernest had arrived the evening before on a visit to his friend, purposing to lay a snare to draw the proud *philosophe* further into the dark abyss of impiety and error. But since his arrival he had not had an opportunity of talking to his friend Morren alone ; so, desirous of creating a favorable occasion for the execution of his plan, he proposed they should take a long walk together to the ruins of the old château.

Now, on their way was the Chapel of Consolation where they saw old Teresa kneeling at the threshold and praying fervently.

“Ah ! you’re there, my good Teresa,” said M. Morren, who knew the old woman well, and never refused her an alms, for he had an excellent heart. “And, as I perceive, always praying. It seems, my good woman, that you’ve nothing else to do than recite your *Aves*.”

“A poor, weak, old woman like me has nothing else to do,” she replied, rising and leaning on her crutch. “But, do you know” she continued, “for whom I am praying, just now ?”

“How should I know, my good woman ?”

“Well, I’m going to tell you. I was praying, just now, for our children who are at Rome ; for your Victor, Monsieur Morren, and then for Joseph and Martin.”

“Upon my faith, your poor Martin oughtn’t to be very much obliged to you. Didn’t you send him there, yourself ?”

“And do you think on account of that,” she sturdily replied, “that I haven’t a true mother’s love for my poor child ? Believe me, sir, the rich can’t love their children more nor better than the poor. And do you imagine the thought of my dear absent son isn’t enough to occupy my days and trouble my nights, that I’m not every instant disturbed with a thousand uneasinesses, thinking of the hazards and dangers that await him, far from me ?”

“Well, foolish woman,” interposed Ernest, with a look of disdain, “in that case, then, whom have you to blame but yourself ? Isn’t it you—you’ve said so—who decided him to undertake that adventurous expedition ? Why didn’t you keep him near you, far from hazards, far from dangers ? You’d then be spared all those useless afflictions and those barren prayers.”

At these words old Teresa fixed one of her keen, curious glances on the new-comer.

“Are you a Christian ?” she asked. “To hear you, one would say you never were——”

“One wouldn’t be far out, perhaps,” Ernest replied, smiling disdainfully.

“In that case you’ll not understand me. And yet I’ll try

to explain to you the reasons that decided me in not keeping my son at home. It was" she continued, in a slow, solemn tone, "because I'm not a mother only; I'm a Christian, too. And I can't forget I was a Christian even before I was a mother. And when, not only the Father of all Christians, but the religion of Christians, too, is so seriously threatened, could I have the heart to be wanting in every duty, in keeping my son alongside me in the hour of danger, depriving our Holy Father of a devoted defender? And if I were so weak, selfish, and cowardly, couldn't God punish me for my indifference by depriving me of my son even if he were at my side? On the other hand, can't God reward my devotion, by guiding and protecting my child, and preserving him safe and sound, even in the thick of the fight, under fire of balls and bullets?"

M. Morren turned round greatly astonished at old Teresa's words; he had never heard her express herself with such force, nobility, and eloquence. As to Ernest Van Dormael, his lips essayed a contemptuous, mocking smile.

"God again! always God," he murmured. "God! It's the only word by which you explain yourself. But where is your God? Have you ever seen him?"

"Can't we believe, then, in the existence of things unless we see them, sir?" she replied.

"I never had the pleasure of seeing you until to-day, and yet didn't you exist? Surely it is impossible for us to see God, and yet everything around us affirms His existence."

"Come along, Morren," interrupted Ernest, at once confounded and irritated by the logical appositeness of the old woman's repartees. "What's the use of losing our time here, disputing with that old fool? There is no God—that's all about it. Let us resume our walk."

"No, sir, it's not all," pursued Teresa earnestly, raising her voice so as to make herself heard by the two men, who were walking away. "Take care the hour doesn't come when you'll wish with all your heart to be able to believe in the existence, the providence of God. But will that last grace be given you? I hope so, sir, but I don't believe it."

Ernest walked rapidly away, raising his shoulders and biting his lips. It was already the second time a direct and menacing allusion recalled to his remembrance the dark, fatal hour of death, and seemed to forebode only anguish and despair at the decisive moment of that fatal passage.

Nevertheless, a still more painful misadventure was reserved for him on that day. A messenger from the Schrambeck villa soon overtook them, running in all haste, and begging M. Morren to return to the house, where a pressing affair awaited him. The free-thinker was then obliged to postpone to a more favorable moment the conversation he calculated on having with his indulgent friend; but he still continued his walk around the ruins of the old castle, and, having found one of the large iron gates open, unceremoniously entered.

At first he wandered at random among the rubbish of the old château, passing through several empty apartments he met on his way, until at length, in an angle of one of the towers, he saw a winding stairs, which he ascended, until he had reached the second floor of the turret. After examining its little vaulted chambers a few moments he descended the turret by another stairs; but, before reaching the bottom, was plunged into complete darkness. At the same time, the steps he was treading suddenly shook and crumbled beneath his feet; he felt himself suddenly precipitated, tumbled down into the darkness—found himself one moment arrested by the fragment of an arch, which soon yielded to the weight of his body—and, at length, from fall to fall, reached the bottom of a dark, subterranean passage or kind of cave.

He was at first slightly stunned by the suddenness of the shock. However, he soon recovered his senses and was glad to see that he had received no bruise. But his position was not less critical, as he soon perceived with profound terror.

A dim light—doubtless that of the sky—shone very high overhead. But all around him in the darkness he could feel the thick walls of his stone prison. No stairs, no door, no passage—no means of escape!

Had he already found his tomb suddenly opening under his feet? That solemn hour of which he had been just reminded—was it already come? These gloomy thoughts disturbed the soul of the poor wretch, who, losing at that moment all his presence of mind, forgot that his friend, M. Morren, not seeing him returning, would immediately institute an active search. In his terror he saw nothing before him but abandonment, oblivion, despair, and death. Drops of cold sweat rolled down his livid face as he strode round his dingy cell, making the dark arches resound with the echo of his broken voice. Suddenly he thought he heard a slight noise far overhead, at the top of the walls, and held his breath that he might hear the better.

"Who's there? Answer!" cried a tremulous voice through the crevices of the old wall.

"Oh! for pity's sake, save me, save me!" he replied, recovering hope at the unexpected sound of that human voice.

"Who are you?"

"I'm a stranger, who came to visit this château and have unfortunately fallen into this cave——"

"Ah! ah! it's you. Well, it's come at last—God's hour of which I spoke to you just now, the hour of expiation, the hour of vengeance!"

And Teresa, who had recognized the sound of his voice, thus smilingly answered the captive's entreaties.

"Ah! don't speak so!" cried the unhappy Ernest. "No, no! It's not possible; have pity on me, pray, help me. You'll not be sorry for it. I'll give you lots of money."

"Bah! What do I want of money?" retorted the old woman.

"Now, tell me do you believe there's a God?"

"Help! help!" he cried.

"Call as often as you like—I'll not help you and no one will come here from the fields nor from the village, for all the villagers think this place is haunted."

At these words the unfortunate man groaned with anguish, and Teresa on the top of the wall began to laugh heartily.

"Now, do you believe God exists?" she repeated.

"Save me, save me, for pity's sake!" he replied beseechingly.

"I'll not save you unless you consent to recognize the existence of God. Remain, if you like, in that well! In that case, good-bye to you, and I abandon you to that All-powerful arm that will know well how to wreak its vengeance on you."

"Wretched woman! horrible vixen!" he cried, "well, yes, I recognise—I believe there is a God."

"Very good. Now, I'm going to get you out of this. Wait for me quietly a moment. You have my word."

And she went as quickly as her legs could carry her towards the garden of the farm adjoining the old castle.

"Father Nelis," said she, going in, "there's a rat in the well, or, in other words, a fine city gent fallen into the Spectre's Tower. Come with me; we must get him out."

"In the Spectre's Tower! I'm sure I'll not go——" replied the good farmer, terrified.

"For shame, father Nelis! who ever could have put such foolish things into your head? I'm sure you're not a child; how could you have the heart then, to let a poor wretch perish, simply because you're afraid of a spectre that never existed except in your imagination."

So the courageous Teresa succeeded, not without difficulty, in persuading him to accompany her to the old château, where she showed him the place where Ernest had fallen, and helped him to make an opening in the debris encumbering the stairs at the end of which he had slipped into the cave.

Van Dormael heard his liberators accomplishing his deliverance: it seemed to him a deadly weight was suddenly lifted off his breast; he raised his head and began to breathe freely.

Without losing any time Teresa threw him a strong rope.

"Tie it firmly round your waist," she cried. "And now pull the rope. Hoist him up cautiously, father Nelis, for the arch is half demolished. One, two, three—there, thank God, here he is!"

Van Dormael was saved; but in those moments of humilia-

tion half dead by terror, he vowed vengeance against his liberatrix. Had not that common peasant, that beggar-woman, shamefully vanquished him ; him, the proud free-thinker, the triumphant unbeliever—had not she forced him to an act of weakness, to do homage to the greatness of God—a homage, it is true, his heart belied ?

Still Ernest, before going away, threw her some gold pieces, but she kicked them away from her with a disdainful gesture.

"Keep your gold, sir," she replied, "and take care in future not to blaspheme so extravagantly, for you see how the dread of death easily made you change your tone. Father Nelis, have the goodness to accompany the gentleman as far as the turning of the road ; I'm sure my society wouldn't be agreeable to him." And she turned her back contemptuously on Ernest and hurried away.

One can easily believe, from this adventure, that the unlucky free-thinker was not pleased with his stay at Schrambeck ; so he experienced a real feeling of relief when, on that very evening, he was on his way to the railway station.

It seemed to him a favorable opportunity for putting his plan into execution.

"My dear friend," he began, as soon as the train had passed the last houses of the village, "circumstances haven't allowed me, until now, to inform you of the principal motive of my present visit."

"The principal motive of your visit ?" interrupted M. Morren, with some astonishment ; "had you then any other than the very natural one of first coming to see me, and then taking some recreation by a little excursion into the country ?"

"Assuredly," replied Van Dormael, "it is my earnest desire to testify to you my esteem and regard in every possible way that determined me to come to you. You know, my good friend, that a large number of the most honorable and intimate of our common friends form part of the powerful society of Freemasons. Now, every one knows you've allowed your son to enter the Pope's service. Allow me to tell you in confidence that this conduct has damaged you in the minds of our companions. They accuse you of weakness, lukewarmness, and conclude that you've ceased to be consistent with your principles."

"But, my dear Ernest, don't they know, on the other hand, that the profound respect I profess for the sacred rights of man, for justice and liberty, obliges me to leave my son entirely free to select a rule of conduct for himself ?"

"All that would be very well if they believed that you simply restricted yourself to letting that mad-cap have his way ; but, on the contrary, they think your secret leanings, your inmost sympathies, adhere to that detested party, that foolish enterprise. This paternal weakness which you have exhibited, alas ! in the opinion of our friends is called cowardice, and from that you may assume that they can't pardon your thus associating yourself, were it only distantly, with the Pope's zealots, the Church's defenders."

"They may, however, be thoroughly convinced," Morren calmly interposed, "that I'm far from approving Victor's resolution. Only—and I frankly admit it—I have left him completely free to select his flag, his cause, his career."

"I sincerely believe it," resumed the crafty tempter. "You know, my dear friend, it would be impossible for me to doubt the truth of your words. But our friends don't share my confidence, my security, as regards that. Come, I'm going to speak frankly to you ; it's worth while. Several members of the powerful society of which I spoke to you just now, who are strongly opposed to you because you have always refused to unite with us, have profited by this circumstance and Victor's departure to represent the matter in its blackest colors. They say you have cowardly forsworn your beliefs, entirely deserted the Party of Progress, and are disposed to return to the vain superstitions, the devout errors that cradled your youth."

"But those are only false calumnies—empty words," replied M. Morren, whom Ernest's persistency had visibly

"Believe me, my friend, that's what I said at the lodge—what I repeated a hundred times. But all that's no use. Their conviction is immovable ; they believe it's well founded. To put an end to this misunderstanding, here now is what I propose to you : your interest and your honor you have no doubt require that those shameful calumnies should be publicly and triumphantly refuted by you. Follow my advice, then ; I engage you, and from this moment enrol you in our glorious society. Acting thus, you will allow us to recognize in you the courageous free-thinker, the adept in progress, whom we have always so cordially esteemed. You will thus close the mouths of your calumniators, the enemies of your good name, and at once regain the confidence of all your old friends."

"Ernest," replied the old man quietly, "I'm thankful to you for your advice—inspired I'm sure by your friendship for me ; but at the same time I declare to you I can't follow it. You are long acquainted with my opinions on this subject. As a bold free-thinker—as you are pleased to call me—my reason and my heart, which I've refused to accept the austere despotism of faith, equally kick against bowing down under the tyrannical yoke of Freemasonry. True, several of my friends are Freemasons, and I see nothing bad in their carrying out their principles, just as I'm not displeased at seeing my wife strictly practise the observances of her religion. But I absolutely refuse to accept for myself that yoke and these bonds. I have not resolutely quitted the ranks of the Church to impose upon myself this new slavery."

"We are not slaves," stammered the Freemason.

"It's useless to interrupt me, my friend. You know perfectly well I know your society as well as you know it yourself. Tell me, is not the solemn oath by which you bind yourself a real slavery ? And the severe punishment menacing any of you who breaks his engagements ? And the secret which you feel bound to surround with all your rites and ceremonies ? Tell me, then, why doesn't each of your Freemasons loudly profess and proclaim his opinions as I profess and proclaim mine ?"

"No matter," replied the irritated Van Dormael, whose tone betrayed ill-concealed vexation and secret rancor. "Your honor requires that you should submit to this obligation."

"Do you think so ? For my part, I'm very easy about it. My conduct will suffice to show everybody I haven't changed and that I'll remain to the end attached to my principles and faithful to myself."

"Still, I repeat, they have ceased to believe you—to have confidence in you. Besides, the pretended slavery of which you speak is very different—confess it—from that of the Church. Moreover, they'll take care to leave you full and entire liberty."

"But it is useless to insist on it any longer. Such a proceeding on my part, I tell you for the last time, is completely impossible."

"At least, don't decide absolutely. Believe me, your own interest will induce you to follow my advice. You love your son, don't you ? Well, by your entering into our powerful society, you can effectively protect him against very grave dangers."

"Against the balls and bullets of the enemies !" interposed the old man, smiling disdainfully.

"At least against the dagger and poniard of the secret societies—arms often employed, and more terrible than those you speak of," quickly responded Ernest, whose glance at that moment assumed a strange, dark expression.

At these words, M. Morren bent down his head thoughtfully, and seemed for some instants plunged in a deep reverie, to the great joy of the Freemason, who thought this powerful argument, reserved for the last, had found a way to the paternal heart.

"Do you think, then," the old man at length resumed, in a grave, thoughtful tone, "that your recommendation is powerful enough to protect my son from the dangers with which your Italian friends threaten him ?"

"Most undoubtedly," replied the Freemason. Then, leaning over, he whispered in a mysterious tone, this sinister disclosure in the ears of the agitated old man: "I'm going to reveal to you, on this subject, a secret that has been confided to me, and of which, as a friend, I feel bound to inform you. Maso di Roccabianca, with whose lofty sentiments and ardent patriotism you are acquainted, has left for Italy. He purposes, I know, assassinating Victor, who at his first visit to you, mortally insulted him. There is only one power that can arrest the upraised arm and turn aside the Carbonaro from his sinister designs, and that power is ours. There is only one way of disarming Maso, forcing him to submit to an authority he respects and dreads. Join us my friend; become a Freemason. Entrust me with the duty of informing the society of your adhesion to our statutes, our principles, our dogmas, and I swear to you, upon my honor, your son is saved."

"And you are certain of Maso's obedience to the orders of the lodge?"

"Perfectly certain," responded Ernest, whose eyes at last began to glisten with a ray of hope.

M. Morren relapsed into a profound silence. He let his head droop; a visible expression of anguish and hesitation was depicted in his features; a painful and desperate struggle raged in his heart; it was the solemn conflict of conviction and love, of philosophic firmness struggling with paternal affection.

Probably Victor's prayers had already been heard in heaven, for old Morren was not slow to raise his head.

"No, no; let us say no more about it. It is useless to insist, I cannot——" he replied.

"You are determined not to consent?" replied Ernest. "Know, then, that you have passed sentence on your son. Henceforward, I can do nothing to protect his life."

"But I——I can," said Morren. "I'll write to my son recommending him to carefully avoid the society which has the cowardliness to weave plots against his life."

At these words, Ernest grew pale with anger, and bit his lips. In making this imprudent revelation to Victor's father, he had himself destroyed his own plan, and, at the very least, compromised the ferocious emissary's sinister projects of vengeance. Nevertheless, he strove to dissimulate his vexation and rancor as best he could, for it was all important not to quarrel with his friend Morren, with whom he had contracted various obligations, and was to some extent indebted. Only, when they reached their journey's end, he hazarded a last observation before leaving him.

"You may write," he said, "but your letter will arrive too late. Be assured, we alone, thanks to our secret communications, can cause our instructions to reach Tommaso before he acts. Besides, if Victor had the luck to escape him now, that would not save him from an inevitable danger. The Carbonaro's dagger, sooner or later, strikes, and strikes without mercy—despite every precaution to escape its strike. Once more, I conjure you, my good friend," continued the hypocrite, imploringly; "consent to take this salutary resolution that every one expects of you, or know that all my friendship, all my devotedness, will henceforth be useless to you."

At these new entreaties, the poor father, deeply affected, clasped his hands for an instant; then instinctively raised his eyes to heaven. Was it a prayer he uttered then? No one knows; but with bent head he almost immediately replied:

"Impossible, Ernest, impossible; I've said my last word. And if I can do nothing for my poor child, may God, at least, protect and guard him!"

A few moments later Victor's father was slowly wending his way to his Schrambeck dwelling, while Ernest returned to town, with a heart full of rancor, vexation and bitterness.

When M. Morren reached the village, he experienced an unusual quietude and repose, and congratulated himself on his courageous resolution. Noiselessly opening the door leading into his sister-in-law's garden, he found on the arbor table, alongside a work-basket—probably left there by Mary—

the "Imitation," and mechanically turned over the leaves until he came across this remarkable passage:

"Make no great account who is for thee or against thee; but let it be thy business and thy care that God may be with thee in everything thou doest."

"Have a good conscience, and God will sufficiently defend thee."

"For he whom God will help, no man's malice can hurt."

"If thou canst but hold thy peace and suffer, thou shalt see without doubt that the Lord will help thee."

"He knows the time and manner of delivering thee, and, therefore, thou must resign thyself to Him."

"It belongs to God to help and to deliver us from all confusion."

M. Morren read and meditated, with profound attention, on the remainder of this chapter. What a marvellous doctrine was this!—humble and modest, and, at the same time, so serene, so consoling that it poured confidence and hope into his heart like balm, despite his customary disdain and incredulity. What an admirable and precious philosophy, so grand and sublime in its simplicity, that after it all novel theories, all audacious systems, faded away like vain dreams! The more the freethinker sought to penetrate it, the less he was able to comprehend it, and was well-nigh amazed. And yet he himself had studied and practised this doctrine in the happy days of youth when he had faith; but he had long forgotten and despised it, having given up his heart and reason to all the sophisms of incredulity, error, and licence. Still he could not forbear recognizing the divine teachings of Christianity, that doctrine of hope and love he had formerly professed. And he felt the desire of again learning to love and revere it revive within him, for his *philosophe's* heart was not yet irretrievably perverted, and that heavenly doctrine alone had brought some solace to his saddened heart and troubled spirit.

The *philosophe*, however, was not converted. Dense clouds still obscured his reason, and he had, unfortunately, too much pride, too much obstinacy, to openly recognize the emptiness and inanity of that darkness that had so long been his light.

He was still seated in the arbor, abandoned to painful and absorbing reveries, when Mary lightly tripped in unobserved.

"Ah! dear uncle," she said laughing, "you want to give me a fright! What! you came in here stealthily, without saying anything, crouching in the shadow of the vine stalks in our arbor like a stranger!"

"You're not displeased to see me here, I suppose," he answered gently, folding his niece's hand in his.

"But what's the matter with you, dear uncle?" she cried. "You seem troubled, your face is so pale. Has any mishap occurred to you?"

"No, no, don't be uneasy," he answered mildly. "I only feel a little tired, agitated, and *triste*. Mary," he continued in a low voice, after hesitating and reflecting for some instants, "aren't you sometimes uneasy about our poor Zouaves who are so far away from us in Rome?"

Judge of Mary's surprise at this unexpected question! Up to that moment M. Morren would not let anyone speak to him of his son, and here now, far from appearing to dread the subject, he touched on it himself.

"Certainly, I don't forget them," she replied, "and very often I suffer more than I could say, thinking of all the dangers they are exposed to. Still, I try to put away those sad gloomy thoughts as much as possible. In the midst of my affliction, I turn towards the Lord, praying Him to extend His divine protection and omnipotent arm over those young soldiers armed in His defence; and I confess, dear uncle, prayer gives me good courage, firm hope, and great consolation."

"So you believe, then, my child, your prayer can draw down upon them the favor and protection of heaven?"

"Assuredly, uncle. Doesn't it belong to God to succor and protect His servants? And what can the violence and wickedness of men do against him whom God wishes to save?"

As Mary uttered the very words he had read in the holy book,

Victor's father, deeply struck, bent down his head, sighed, and remained silent for a few moments.

"How happy you are, my child," he sighed, "to believe so firmly in the powerful intervention of God and His providence!" And here, astonished himself at those words he instinctively uttered, he hastened to add: "But, unfortunately, all those consoling beliefs are only vague reveries, vain imaginings. It is only blind chance, and not divinity, that governs this world."

"Blind chance, uncle? Are you speaking seriously?" cried Mary, who had not failed to perceive the favorable impression her words had produced on this wavering soul. "If our splendid universe, in its sublime unity and its majestic beauty, had only been created and governed by blind chance, would there not, in that fact alone, be a miracle much more evident and a thousand times more incomprehensible than that great miracle of the creation of the universe by the omnipotent, perfect, and eternal God? And if it is impossible that all created things owe their origin to chance, it's just as impossible they should owe their perfect maintenance and preservation to it. Get along, uncle, it's no use talking like that; you're far too learned, far too clear-sighted, I'm sure, to believe chance alone created, directed, and organized the universe."

"Indeed," M. Morren smilingly interrupted, "I knew long ago my dear little Mary is as intelligent and as learned as good, but I'd never have expected to hear her reason so logically and so accurately. Really, little girl, one would think you had studied philosophy. No doubt" he added, pointing to the "Imitation," you have studied "your system, and drawn your reasonings from this little book?"

"That precious book," she modestly replied, "undoubtedly contains those dogmas and lessons, with a number of other truths not less sublime and consoling. However, we have no need to search so far for them when we wish to find them. Don't we every day invoke 'Our Father who art in Heaven' that His holy will, which we revere, may be done 'in heaven and on earth,' and whom, at the same time, we pray to 'deliver us from all evil?' Ah! dear uncle," she continued, fixing a glance of love and solicitude on the man's face, "I would like to make a request of you that will appear, perhaps, rash and importunate. But pray, think of my affection for you—which has dictated it to me—and don't refuse your little goddaughter, who loves you so tenderly this slight favor!"

"What is it, then?" asked the old man, whose curiosity was aroused. "Believe me, my dear Mary, if it depends upon me to satisfy you, that it will be impossible for me to refuse."

"And it's really such a little thing," she interrupted. "Only promise me to say every day a *Pater* and *Ave* for my intention, and also—and particularly—for those dear Zouaves."

The old man's face darkened and it was some moments before he replied.

"Impossible, my child," said he at first; "this is only childishness, pure superstition."

"First of all, it's not impossible; in the second place, there's not the least trace of superstition in it; and lastly—I've not forgotten it—you've given me your word. You wouldn't wish to make me believe you were afraid of the secret power, the magic influence of two poor little prayers?"

"Certainly not," he replied, laughingly—"what harm could your *Pater* and *Ave* do me?"

"Then," said she, caressingly, "why refuse me?"

"Well, after all, who's thinking of refusing you, little enchantress," he replied in a half-bantering, half-reluctant tone. "I'll do it, if you insist on it, and since I've promised to do it."

"On your word of honor?"

"Well, yes, on my word of honor."

At these words Mary again raised towards heaven a lingering glance of joy and gratitude.

As to M. Morren, when he maturely reflected at night on the various incidents and experience of that day, he owned to him-

self that he felt a quietude and satisfaction of mind that he had not known for a long time. And yet, thinking of the dangers Victor was running, he sometimes endured heart-breaking anguish and bitter grief; but in those moments he thought he heard close to him the voice that dictated those words of the holy book: "For he whom God will help, no man's malice can hurt."

The spirit of good and the spirit of evil contended for the *philosophe's* heart on that day. Assuredly, the bad angel was very far from having plucked the palm and carried off the victory; but still the free-thinker was not yet converted, although deeply moved.

CHAPTER IX.

IN CAMP.

Some weeks have passed since the events narrated in our last chapter. Victor and his companions, after their farewell visit to Stefano and his sister, have quitted the Eternal City for a time, and repaired to the camp pitched between Terni and Collescipoli.

Both Joseph and Victor took care to keep their Schrambeck friends informed of all the leading events and interesting details of their new life. For their part, the villagers impatiently watched for the days when it might be expected the postman would bring news of the young Zouaves. Jean Pierre, the old rural guard, never failed, every day after Mass, to ask Mary if she had heard from Joseph or Victor, and when he had obtained some fragment of a letter, or, at least, some valuable information from the young girl, he hastened to communicate it to his enthusiastic auditory.

But old Sus, the farrier, not feeling satisfied with the recapitulations of the old soldier, who could only transmit some disconnected scraps of correspondence, boldly asked Mlle. Van Dael to please lend him such of Joseph's letters as did not contain private details, to read them in public. The young girl, far from refusing his request, hastened to place a packet of her brother's letters in his hands. So the Sunday following, after High Mass, old Jean Pierre triumphantly accosted the ordinary members of his little Schrambeck society, and joyfully flourishing the packet of letters, cried: "Hurrah! here's news of our Zouaves!"

Then with profound gravity he took his spectacles out of his pocket, carefully wiped the glasses with the skirt of his coat, majestically placed them on his nose, and with becoming deliberation, unfolded the first sheet.

"First of all," he began, "here's how Joseph briefly relates their march to the camp: 'I'll tell you very briefly our march on Terni. We have left Rome at night to halt at daybreak. Then in a trice, they fetch the water and wood, the fire crackles and the coffee boils; every one holds out his porringer and the breakfast's over, and we're again on the march with arms and baggage. The atmosphere is glowing, the perspiration inundates our foreheads and streams through every pore, our throats are parched with thirst, and our tongues adhere to our palates, our legs bend under us and our feet are swollen. But what's the odds? We're only the more gratified when the captain raises his voice and cries: 'Halt!' in some shady valley.'"

"That's right," cried the carpenter. "They're brave lads, true soldiers, there's not a doubt of it."

"And then," resumed the guard, continuing his reading, "we have music: the drum beats, the bugle sounds, which naturally increases our enthusiasm and gaiety. At length the music stops, and to lighten our march we sing; we sing in Flemish as well as French, for we Flemish were in great force in the detachment going to Terni. It was on the evening of the first day, I recollect, that approaching the town of Civita-Castellana we felt so exhausted, so overcome by fatigue and heat, that all our courage and gaiety vanished, and a profound

silence reigned in our ranks—a strange thing and quite novel ! But Martin, who, as you know is a great enemy to sadness, and, besides, knows not fatigue, suddenly struck up, near me, in a ringing voice, our popular song, *Klass en trouwaf zijn leven niet*. Thereupon the entire company burst out laughing and all our comrades from Flanders chorused the refrain of our jovial companion.

"But, as you may imagine of all our national airs, it is the hymn of the Belgian volunteers, "For the See of Peter," we repeat oftenest and with most pleasure. Victor, who, in his leisure moments, sometimes takes to rhyming, has translated it, and turned it into a kind of *Brabanconne*. So the hymn of victory of our dear native land arises and resounds every day among us under the beautiful Italian sky. I hasten to transcribe the national and poetical work of our friend Victor in this letter, so that, in remembrance of us, our good friends may sometimes repeat the refrain to the echoes of our fair land."

"Bravo ! bravo !" cried all the bystanders unanimously. "We'll copy it and learn it from this day."

"We'll begin this very instant," said the blacksmith.

"That's not the question," interposed Jean Pierre. "I suppose you'd prefer first to hear the rest of the news. Listen, then," he continued, unfolding a second letter ; "here's what Joseph writes on the subject of their camp life : 'We are now camped a short distance from Terni, where the staff are stationed. We sleep under tents, and when we came here we had first to learn to pitch them. Now, in this respect, our education is complete ; so henceforward we devote ourselves to other occupations. Hardly have we finished the exercise and manoeuvres when we disperse in different ways to look forward, draw water, and buy provisions. Our hardest task is in providing ourselves with water, for, unfortunately, the springs are a great way off, in the neighborhood of Coilescipoli, a small village, perched on the top of a steep hill, three miles from our camp. We generally use large wooden pails to draw water from the spring, but jovial Martin finds these enormous pails infinitely too light for his robust shoulders. 'Haven't you got anything else to give me ?' he cried, with a burst of disdainful laughter. 'These little half-pints hold no more water than I could carry in the hollow of my hands.' Our captain then placed at his disposal a regular trough, nearly as large as an ordinary wherry. Without stopping or stumbling he brings it back full on his back, and it's a pleasure to see all our thirsty companions, impatient for their share of the refreshing liquid, which he generously dispenses, crushing around him on his return."

"Now we've got to clean our belts, polish and furbish up our arms, and perform a thousand other little occupations incidental to camp life. You see by that our days are very well occupied, and that we can't be dull in the midst of such perpetual activity and constant diversity. And yet, despite so many fatiguing exercises and incessant manoeuvres, such a multiplicity of duties and toilsome labors, we have never been so happy or contented as we are now. We wouldn't exchange our modest and laborious life for all the grandeurs and triumphs of the universe. Aren't we working, and shall we not henceforward be suffering, for the Church, the divine spouse of Christ; and isn't there consolation, joy, and sweetness in that thought alone to render all our sufferings light and our privations supportable. Ah ! of what isn't man capable when he works for God and with God !

"The Pontifical volunteers for the most part belong to rich and noble families; they have been reared in the midst of all the luxurious comforts, delicacies, and delights of prosperity. One might expect, then, to see them disheartened by privations so severe, or become weak and emaciated, and succumb to such constant fatigues. For instance, when they return from the morning exercise, after marching, running, leaping and climbing for six or seven hours, without taking breath, they re-enter the camp harassed and weakened, with eyes swollen, lips burning, mouths gaping, and chests heaving. And yet a moments' repose, a few instants' sleep, suffice to

banish fatigue and recover strength; half an hour hasn't passed when they re-appear, quite restored, full of vigor, courage and animation, with renewed enthusiasm and gaiety.

'Scarcely have we rested for an instant than one of us begins to sing, another to play the flute, a third rises and grasps his companion's hand or pinches his ears playfully, and then rings out, from all our joyful groups, the grand cry of "Long live the Holy Father ! Long live the valiant colonel of the Pontifical Zouaves !"

"Hurrah," suddenly shouted the blacksmith in a thundering voice, interrupting worthy Jean Pierre in the middle of a paragraph. "There are brave young fellows, true soldiers, it's easy to know them ! Ah ! you'll see they'll beat the revolutionary armies just as easily as a piece of red-hot iron beaten on an anvil !"

"Then, in the course of the evening," continued the rural-guard resuming his reading, "we delight to wander back in thought to the plains and villages of our dear Campine, for I needn't tell you we can't forget it: a true son of the Campine remains faithful at once to his creed and country. Then we sing in chorus some one of the songs of our country, or we discourse—always with renewed pleasure—either of our ancient legends or old national customs, traditions, and manners, or of the numerous friends and acquaintances we have left behind us at home. Among other things, we have devoted an entire evening to recalling the popular surnames, and *sobriquets* that, as you know, the different towns of the Campine bear. But, above all, we feel an indescribable joy and emotion every time we speak of our dear Schrambeck, its old manor, its pine forest, its green prairies, and particularly its good inhabitants so sincerely beloved."

"That's right !" cried the carpenter. "That's what I like to hear. Jean Pierre take care to tell Mademoiselle Marie she mustn't forget to write to her brother to tell him from us that we're never so glad as when we receive good news of our dear Zouaves."

"Certainly, I'll not fail," responded old Piquet, greatly flattered by the interest and pleasure his reading excited. Then he paused for a moment, readjusting his spectacles and looking through the packet for a fresh letter, leaving his numerous auditors leisure to exchange reflections on what they had heard.

"Ah ! ah !" he cried at last, "here's a passage about Victor in this letter. 'I must tell you,' writes Joseph to his mother, 'of an adventure of which our dear Victor was the hero. There's a butcher at Terni who, on account of his extraordinary strength, as well as ferocity, has, with good reasons, become the terror of the entire town. Truth compels me to say that he is by no means a friend of the Zouaves ; however he consents to sell them his beef, pork, and mutton, provided he gets a good price. Now, it being Victor's duty lately to go and pay him the disbursements of the entire company, this Hercules of the block, thinking to easily intimidate our young volunteer, claimed much more money than was due to him. Victor distinctly refused to give him a ha'penny more than the actual amount. The angry brute then became furious, and brandished his outlass with a horrible imprecation. 'Do me the favor of putting down your knife,' said Victor quietly to him. At these words the ruffians, thinking himself stronger and braver than our companion, flung himself upon him with the intention of plunging the blade into his heart ; but Victor, exhibiting the greatest coolness at that terrible moment, parried the blow with his left arm, and used his right to deal the murderer a blow, full in the face, so well aimed that the latter, with smashed teeth and bleeding lips, went spinning along the pavement, having, as he deserved, received an excellent lesson, which will make him less desirous in future of a fuller acquaintance with our Zouave's fists. This adventure, as you may well think, has resulted in still further increasing the general esteem and sympathy for our dear Victor, who possesses everyone's good opinion, and was not long in being raised to the grade of corporal, to our unanimous satisfaction ?"

And the old guard, wishing to enjoy his success to the fullest extent, continued his reading, to the great delight of his auditors.

But there was an aspect of the life of the Pontifical Zouaves upon which Joseph's extrememodesty hindered him expatiating—the admirable piety, the constant and tender devotion that, above all things, animated the young volunteers.

Certainly there was nothing strange in that. There can be no doubt our friend Victor and his two companions—who were all three so generously vowed to the defence of the Church of Christ—distinguished themselves, even in the midst of that rude camp life, by their constant fervor and perfect purity.

But they were not the only ones to give such grand examples of virtue, zeal, and piety. All the Pontifical Zouaves were as much distinguished by their devotion as by their firm courage; many of them slightly concealed, under the soldier's rough uniform, the halo of the saint and the white wings of an angel.

"In the ranks of the Zouaves," writes Bresciani, in his "Olderico," "were found in great numbers valiant young men of truly angelic innocence and purity who had voluntarily offered themselves as holocausts to the great God of battles, resolving joyfully to die in defence of the rights of the Holy See. Everywhere might have been encountered these young men and intrepid combatants, animated with holy joy and triumphant ardor, but, at the same time, preserving that calm dignity and wise restraint that alone become Christian heroes marching to the perils of a glorious enterprise. In the evening, they thronged the churches to assist at Benediction of the Most Holy Sacrament, and in the morning, those who could spare a half hour hastened to town to hear Mass. On awaking, they never failed to kiss with pious respect the medals for which they were indebted to the loving solicitude of a fiancée, a sister or mother, on their departure, and many of them knelt at the head of their bed reciting the three *Aves* in honor of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin. When the new Zouaves who came to be enrolled in Rome after the battle of Castelfidardo presented themselves at the camp of Monte Rotondo, their first care was to assist at the Vespers the clergy of that town were then celebrating in the church; after which, as is customary in many parochial churches in Belgium and France, they ranged themselves at both sides of the choir and chanted psalms and canticles in a loud voice. All the faithful assembled in the church felt penetrated with respect and emotion, hearing those young soldiers singing the praises of God with as much fervor and recollectedness as if they wore the soutane and chasuble instead of uniform.

When they kept garrison at Terni, and later, when they encamped in the neighborhood, it was a sight at once moving and sublime to see this valiant and faithful army at evening prayer. Then, in the centre of each battalion of Zouaves who had formed squares, its chaplain took up his position to say prayers. There was nothing more beautiful and edifying to see those young and valiant soldiers—fatigued from the labors of the day, exhausted by the multiplicity of exercises, manoeuvres, sham attacks and assaults, marches and counter-marches—thoughtful, prostrate and with heads uncovered, humbly directing their glances to heaven, raising their voices in prayer to the Lord, thanking Him for all the benefits accorded to them during the day, asking grace for days to come, and renewing, in His presence, the offering of their hearts, their blood, their lives. Who, after that, could be astonished at seeing those young Christians—so grand of soul, so pure of conscience!—marching to the combat—one against ten—despite their numbers casting terror into the ranks of their enemies, and, if they could not triumph, selling their lives dearly!

When General Lamoricière visited the camp at Terni, where he found the Zouaves assembled—the German battalion and Pontifical Legion—he ordered a sham assault on the heights of Callescipoli. The Legion defended the little town which the Germans and Zouaves were to simultaneously attack. The general, witnessing the incredible ardor, address, impetuosity, and brilliant courage those heroic young men displayed, cried out

on the battle-field at the end of the assault: "Let me only have ten thousand such soldiers as these under my orders and I'll undertake to drive every conspirator out of Italy!"

CHAPTER X.

BEFORE THE STORM.

The Piedmontese Fanti had sent his disgraceful ultimatum* to the General-in-Chief of the Pontifical army. Immediately afterwards the Zouaves, as well as the other divisions stationed at the camp at Terni, marched to Foligno, Serravalle, Toden-tino, and Macerata, to form a junction with Lamoricière's troops preparing to defend Ancona against the Piedmontese attack.

Pimodan's Zouaves quitted Macerata on the night of November 9th, and camped a short distance from the town and sanctuary of Loreto. But the enemy, to the number of twelve thousand, had already seized on the town of Pesaro, heroically defended by Colonel Zappi and his twelve hundred brave fellows. By notorious treachery, they had gained a dishonorable victory at Perugia, crowned by the massacre of a virtuous and innocent minister of God; in fine, they had seized on the citadel of Spoleto, which, commanded by the valiant Irish Captain, Miles O'Reilly, made, to the last, a vigorous defence.

But we must confine ourselves to rapidly adverting to these occurrences—all of which contribute their share of glory and honor to the Pontifical legions, and of shame to the Piedmontese generals and soldiers—and hasten to rejoin our Zouaves.

Evening was come, and darkness was spreading over the plain. The camp in which the valiant little army was entrenched presented, at that moment, a spectacle well worthy of attracting the attention of angels and men.

M. de Beudelièvre, Commandant of the Zouaves, had them assembled around him, to address to them the following words:

"My men, at length we approach the eve of that glorious and much longed-for day when we are to testify before God, before the Church, before Christian Europe and the civilized world, by the fervor of our zeal, the courage of our hearts, the steadfast and unswerving resolution with which we are going to defend the standard of the faith against those impious enemies who confront us ten against one, and threaten us with their arms. Many among us will certainly appear before the throne of God to-morrow. Let us strive, then, in view of that supreme moment, to sound and interrogate our hearts and purify our souls, in order that baptism of our blood may appear more meritorious and acceptable in the eyes of the Eternal Majesty—the Eternal Purity! I have already discharged that duty at Foligno; whoever wishes to again perform his has only to go and find the chaplain."

In a little corner, separated from the rest of the camp by two thick hedges and a deep trench, was our compatriot, the Rev. Mgr. Sacré, chaplain of the Zouaves. Each of those brave young fellows, respectful, modest, and full of recollectedness, came in turn humbly to his feet, and when he had received absolution, rose joyfully, and went to kneel upon the sod some distance off, and piously perform the prescribed penance.

While the minister of the Lord distributed the benedictions of heaven to the young soldiers on their knees, Joseph and Martin, who had finished their confession, were chatting in a

* The Minister Cavour, when he sent his celebrated ultimatum to the Pontifical Court, ordered Generals Fanti and Cialdini, at the same time, to cross the frontier of the States of the Church at the head of two divisions and, to crown all, before even the Court of Rome had time to reply, the General-in-Chief of the Sardinian army addressed his audacious declaration of war to the Vicar of Jesus Christ, in presence of the triumphant revolution and astounded Christendom. The reader will recollect the opprobrious epithets cast upon the Pontifical Zouaves by Cavour, Fanti, Cialdini, and the journals in the interest of the cosmopolitan revolution; and how nobly their conduct vindicated their characters from those unmerited reproaches.

low tone, about fifty steps from the extremity of the trench.

As to Victor, he had received absolution and was performing his penance aside, plunged in a profound meditation and absorbed in prayer. His glances rested on the summit of the dome that shields the modest and holy house of the Virgin Mary. That noble cupola, tracing its sombre outline on the blue back-ground of the clouds, seemed clearly pointing to heaven with its tapering spire. With hands crossed upon his breast, and his face beaming with faith, hope, and fervor, he lovingly repeated the name of the Mother of God, the heavenly Mary.

At length he arose and joined his friends.

"Well, we are ready," he cried out to them, as he drew near. "Here, at least, is a good work done, isn't it? So, my friends," he continued, in a more serious tone, "the victims are now prepared for the sacrifice. We await nothing now but the sacrificer; and, in all probability, he'll not be long coming."

"What sacrificer?" replied Martin. "Do you mean the general enemy? Well, he has only to come and all his soldiers with him. I promise them, it'll not be with little lambs and weak, gentle sheep they'll have to do."

At these words the giant rose rapidly, stretching out his enormous arms before him, proudly raising his head and throwing himself at a single bound into a posture of defence with contracted brow, fury and disdain in his face, and blue eyes dilated.

"Keep up your courage, my brave Martin," Victor quietly resumed. "We are certainly soldiers as well as victims, and, at least, we'll sell our lives dearly. But, you know, the enemy's forces are far superior in number to ours. No doubt, many of us, to-morrow, will have to seal, with their blood, their solemn engagements contracted before God and the Church. I know it, I am prepared for it, and yet, let me own it, I never felt so tranquil—so happy!"

"It is the same with me," interposed Joseph. "Besides, my friend, isn't our future destiny, when regarded with the eyes of faith, truly happy—thoroughly desirable? Whether victory crowns, or death smites us, we are equally certain to triumph. If we must die, we fall at least fearlessly, with the paternal benediction of the Vicar of Christ, and from the plain crowned by the humble house of Nazareth, soar upwards to the glorious tabernacle of the heavenly Jerusalem."

"Really, Joseph, how well you're able to speak!" cried Martin, seized with admiration at his comrade's words. "All you say is really so fine that I'll be inconsolable if I should happen to survive to-morrow's battle."

The two young cousins could not help laughing at this simple but touching exclamation of their valiant comrade.

"You're right, Joseph," resumed Victor, after a few moment's silence. "Our lot is really enviable and thoroughly happy. For my part, at least, I'd not exchange the destiny that awaits me for all the glories and pleasures of the universe. Haven't I had the honor of kissing the venerable hands of the Father of the Faithful. Hasn't he graciously given me his prayers and benedictions! Haven't I prostrated myself before the blessed relics of the martyrs and apostles, and on the earth bedewed by their precious blood? And shall I not have the happiness, the ineffable joy, to-morrow, of seeing Him descend within the shadow of those very walls where, according to the word of the angel, he descended into the immaculate womb of His holy Mother? I have only one grace, one happiness more to obtain, to hope for, and perhaps I'll render myself worthy of that happiness by joyfully dying for my faith and the glory of Christ. It is to that end I have offered my youth and my blood, my heart and my life to God? And I have nothing more to ask of Mary, when I shall go to kneel in her house to-morrow, than this grace—the greatest of all."

Here the three friends kept silent for some instants, for they were deeply moved by Victor's words.

"Do you know whom I was thinking of that moment?" Victor at length resumed. "Well my thoughts wandered very far from me to our native land. I seemed to see our dear

friends praying for us, all together, at the threshold of the Chapel of Our Lady of Consolation."

"Perhaps it's what they're doing just now. Besides, you know, we'll never be without their prayers, and their love."

"Have they had time to receive our letters from Foligno," asked Martin anxiously.

"I don't think so," replied Victor. "But the papers will not have failed to inform them of the Piedmontese invasion and their disloyal conduct."

"Poor mother! dear friends! Nothing for them but tears and tribulation!" sighed Joseph.

"God will come to their aid—we've so long besought Him!" Victor promptly resumed. "And even if we should die on the battle-field, far away from them, they'll still be sustained by faith, by hope, by the divine promises of heaven and the happy certainty of rejoining us there. But my father, my unhappy father!" cried the noble and generous fellow, whose voice betrayed heart-rending sorrow; "my father, whom I have loved so tenderly and whom I cannot save! Oh! where will he be for all eternity? Shall I see him again? My friends, my brothers, you will pray for him along with me to-morrow, at the feet of Mary, won't you?" and he broke down, covering his face with his hands, to stifle his sobs.

"Confidence and hope, my friend," said Joseph to him, grasping his hand, "Don't you know the divine power of prayer—above all, the prayers of a child for a father? Who tells you your father's heart hasn't already felt the mysterious influence of grace? Doesn't your mother tell you he's completely changed. Come, my dear Victor, I can't tell you why, but a secret presentiment tells me that your father will recover the faith and return to God. Don't despair, then—courage and confidence."

"Thanks, Joseph, your good words fortify and console me," replied Victor, rising. "May that consoling promise be realized! Believe me, I, too, would like to be able to hope; and yet, each time I think of my father it seems to me that the blade of a poniard buries itself in my breast, I experience such doubts, fears, disquietudes, and grief."

But darkness had soon overshadowed the horizon, veiling all the details of the picturesque and graceful tableau of mountain and plain, and our three friends rose to rejoin their companions who were preparing for sleep, with the earth for a pillow and the sky for a tent.

Before his departure from Foligno, Victor had written to his parents. "My good father, my fond mother," he wrote, "these lines are perhaps the last you will receive from me. We are going to encounter the enemy who is coming to meet us with very superior forces. And yet, my dear parents, don't be grieved. Whatever may happen, you and I are in the hands of the Lord, and doesn't it belong to him, as the 'Imitation' says, to succor and protect His children in their distress? And then, you know, already I've long offered the sacrifice of my life and blood to God; I renew this offering to-day, with the same tranquility of mind, the same resignation; and, if this sacrifice of blood is soon to be demanded of me, I hope to be able to prepare for it with calmness and accomplish it with joy. As to you, my very dear parents, don't despair, I implore you, if this sacrifice should also be imposed on you, but raise your eyes to the Lord and put your hope and confidence in Him. My dear mother, didn't you tell me that you'd have the courage to thank God if you were one day to be the mother of a martyr?"

"Father, forgive me, if I now dare speak to you with unusual liberty. Far from me the thought of laying aside the respect due to you, but the moment is so grave, so solemn, that it will be my excuse. O father, don't resist any longer the voice of God; draw near to Him—your only refuge; don't remain deaf to the only prayer—perhaps the last prayer—of your poor child; don't refuse to fulfil his last wish, the most ardent desire of his soul. Father, if sometimes the thought of death, appears to me bitter and sinister, it is because then I feared that I should be separated from you for all eternity. But it won't be so, will it, dear father? You'll be moved by the fervent

prayer of your exiled son; you'll return to God—to that God of forgiveness and love, whom you have loved and served in the days of your youth. For a voice speaks in my heart and tells me to hope; henceforth, consoled and sustained by that divine hope, I can joyfully return to my heavenly country. Then, dear father, my victorious and happy soul will constantly seek you, follow you, as well as my beloved mother, so fondly and justly cherished; then our transient separation will have lost all its bitterness and severity, and will be followed by the never-ending joys and delights of an eternal re-union. And in that sweet hope, adieu, adieu, fond father, beloved mother.—Your Victor."

As Victor anticipated, the papers had published details of the Piedmontese invasion, and, at the news of this sacrilegious treason, all loyal souls and generous hearts in every European home were transported with indignation.

M. Morren, from the very first, was greatly irritated.

"The misfortune I foresaw has at length occurred! O unhappy child! How could he have allowed himself to be overcome—to be carried away by such a folly? And I, blind, senseless father!" he continued, beating his forehead in his angry transports—"why was I so weak as to let him go?"

Nevertheless, at that moment all his paternal affection awakening in his heart, dispelled the bitterness of his resentment, and aroused his indignation against the invaders of the Church's patrimony.

"The traitors, the cowards! They don't blush to go into the fight ten against one!" he cried, striking with his clenched fist the paper containing Cialdini's manifesto, which he had spread out before him on the table. "And those usurpers, those traitors, have the signal audacity, too, to insult my noble Victor and his innocent companions, whom they treat as 'brigands,' 'drunken foreigners,' 'whom the love of gold and the thirst of booty have brought into Italy.' Shame on those calumniators, shame on those fools who thus outrage an assemblage of devoted, courageous, heroic young men!"

And the unhappy old man, in his indignation, hastily seized the paper and tore it in pieces, after which, leaning sadly on the table, he sighed.

"Victor, O my Victor," he murmured, "hope of my old age, honor of my house, alas! what is to become of you? shall I see you again?"

From that moment there was no more repose for that afflicted heart. And yet the studious *philosophe* thought he could find in study a remedy for his grief. He opened, by chance, a volume of Voltaire, and his eyes alighted at the place where these words are inscribed: "All our actions are subject to fatality; the empire of necessity rules all man's movements, and the world's too." He flung the book far away from him with a gesture of disdain.

"O proud, vain reason, which affords no solace to my afflicted heart, but faith in a ferocious necessity—a blind instinct equally governing the most illustrious men and the commonest animals!" he murmured, with a mournful sigh. "Oh! how much sublimer, sweeter, and more consoling are the words of Mary's book!"

Uttering these words, he rose, his forehead burning, his chest oppressed. All the rest of the day he wandered about the fields, no rest anywhere for his bruised feet, no consolation for his unrestrained grief.

From the day the papers communicated the fatal news to the ladies, they repaired every evening to the Chapel of Consolation. They never failed to meet Teresa, the beggar-woman, there; and the three poor mothers, anxious but trustful, together prayed to God for the safety of their children.

The two brave sisters were calm, courageous, and resigned. Carefully dissembling their grief, they always knew how to find words of hope to keep up poor Morren's sinking courage, or dry the good and affectionate Mary's tears.

Poor Mary seemed to grow yet more uneasy and suffer more. The once lively, laughing, joyous child had lost her gaiety, enthusiasm, and vigor. Retiring into her little room every evening, she passed long hours on her knees praying to Mary

Immaculate. Then, when she started up out of her sleep at night, bathed in a cold perspiration and choked with terror, under the influence of some horrible dream, she again prostrated herself before the sacred image of the Queen of Angels, and again sought courage and consolation in prayer.

One night she was so terrified that she sought refuge in her mother's room. Madame Van Dael, after protracted and distressing sleeplessness, had at length fallen into a slumber.

"Mary, my dear child, what has happened to you?" she asked, somewhat startled at this sudden apparition.

"Oh, mother, I was so terrified!" she murmured. "I dreamt I saw Joseph dying on the battle-field. He smiled gently upon me for the last time, and then——"

Here Mary's voice was lost in a torrent of tears.

Madame Van Dael pressed the poor child affectionately to her heart, and wiped away the tears that coursed down her cheeks.

"My dear child, why torture yourself thus?" she said with forced calmness. "Those visions—those images—are only vain dreams you ought to strive and banish from your mind. Hope, my dear child, hope. Our Joseph will certainly return to us, happy and healthy. God and Mary will restore him at the united prayers of his mother and his sister."

The young girl then returned to her room, somewhat consoled, and strove to forget her terrors in sleep.

In the course of the same night, Madame Morren, after weeping a good deal, at last fell asleep, about daybreak, when a terrible dream disturbed her tardy repose. She thought she saw her dear Victor surrounded by wild beasts with tawny manes bristling, and eyes flashing; tigers, lions, white bears, leopards, and panthers, all crowded round him, seeking to devour him, and stretching forward their formidable jaws and sharp claws. The young man, exposed to their ferocious attacks, valiantly defended himself; nevertheless, his strength and blood were beginning to be exhausted, his sight was failing, his breathing slow and sibilant. Suddenly, an enormously large lion rushed at him, flung him down upon the ground, and the troop of monsters, simultaneously flinging themselves upon the innocent victim, soon left upon the plain nothing but shapeless, palpitating, bleeding remains.

The terrified mother awoke in the midst of the horrors of this dream, and wildly gazed around her, as if she still expected to see the dreadful vision that had troubled her sleep unfold itself to her gaze. But the rosy rays of morning already shed their pearly tints on forest and plain, and the unhappy mother, half-quieted, humbly prostrated herself near her bed of pain.

"O Mary," she cried, raising her eyes to the image of the Virgin Mary, "you see the tears I am shedding, the anguish that tortures me. You know, O Mother of God, what a mother may suffer! Upon Golgotha you have drunk to the very dregs the deepest chalice of grief and abandonment that was ever presented to maternal lips! Have pity on me; ask of God to grant me courage to bear to the end the sorrows of the sacrifice. Preserve my son to my love, my God, if such is Thy will; but in all things, and at all times may Thy will be done! Let Thy providence decide what is most necessary to our salvation and happiness!"

At the time his mother was praying for him, Victor knelt, along with his companions, in the sanctuary of Loreto, where for ages has been miraculously preserved the humble terrestrial dwelling under whose roof became incarnate the Divine Word.

In the interior of that temple was about to take place "a scene as moving as solemn, worthy of the glorious times of the Crusaders," said a holy French priest, to whom it was given to be an eye-witness of it.

"At four o'clock in the morning, Lamoricière Pimodan, the whole staff, flugelmen, Dutch and Franco-Belgian regiments, Foreign Legion, Italian artillery and guards, received the Body of Our Lord in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar. I saw them thoroughly recollected, most of them prostrated on the pavement of that church which illustrious foreheads have

already so often touched. Above all, the recollectedness of the two generals was so profound, so calm, so sublime, that I could not repress my emotion at the sight of them. Besides, most of the officers who surrounded them shed abundances of tears."

Who, indeed, could have restrained his tears in presence of such devotion and courage united to such faith and piety? Who would not have felt moved at the sight of so many heroes, who, prostrate at the feet of the Mother of God, renewed in her presence the sacrifice of their lives at the very moment when they were about accomplishing it.

Joseph and Martin slowly withdrew from the altar, with profound recollectedness and touching fervor. As to Victor, one had taken him for a marble statue, so absorbed was he in fervent prayer, and completely indifferent to all that was passing around him. At that solemn moment he had only one thought, one wish—he was praying for his father.

And when at last he recrossed the threshold, going, with his companions, towards the place of combat, he stopped for a moment to turn aside his head and glance again beseechingly towards the smiling Virgin on the altar, murmuring: "O father, father!"

CHAPTER XI.

THE ABYSS.

While Lamoricière's valiant little army halted for an instant under the shadow of the sanctuary of Loreto, the Piedmontese forces, who were manœuvring to surround them, distributed themselves in great numbers through all the neighboring villages. Already Orsino, Camerano, Castelfidardo, and the intervening hamlets had been occupied by the enemy's regiments, who, confiding in their immense numerical superiority, saw, undismayed, the moment of combat approaching.

On the evening of the appointed day—on that very evening when Victor and his companions, to prepare for battle, were reconciled to God in the sacrament of Penance—two Piedmontese soldiers, quitting their comrades' noisy groups, were walking side by side to the top of one of the hills overlooking the town of Castelfidardo.

One of them, who looked from twenty-five to thirty years of age, had recently arrived at the Piedmontese camp, and seemed to be a native of the southern provinces of Italy. He had presented himself at the camp a few days before the invasion of the Pontifical frontiers, and after a rather long interview with the General-in-Chief, had been incorporated in an infantry company.

No one knew this new-comer; and the mystery surrounding him was not slow to excite general curiosity. To what end had he come, and what secret mission had he to fulfil? Several of the officers of the army, wishing to appear more far-sighted and better informed in their comrades' eyes than they really were, maintained that this stranger was none other than one of the chiefs of the Carbonari sent by Garibaldi to carry out in the army some project known to the revolutionist alone. Be that as it may, they knew nothing positive touching the origin and plans of that unknown one who, moreover, appeared extremely reserved and very uncommunicative towards his companions-in-arms.

He seemed, however, from the first, to exhibit a very special confidence in one of the soldiers of his company—the Piedmontese Orazio; so they were often met walking and chatting together. The Piedmontese, very probably, knew well the history and antecedents of his mysterious friend; but he was as mute as the tomb on that subject.

At the moment we speak of, the two friends, having reached the edge of a little plateau that crowns the summit of the mountain at this side, had stretched themselves on the grass to rest.

"What a fine evening!" cried the stranger, after an instant. "And it precedes a day still finer—the day of my vengeance!"

"Say of our vengeance," interrupted the Piedmontese. "Indeed, aren't we going to-morrow to attack and vanquish the enemies of Italy! Or, now that I think of it, might you have besides some personal vengeance, Gennaro, to wreak in the tumult of the fight?"

Gennaro—for that unhappy one had joined the Piedmontese battalions immediately after his departure from Rome—Gennaro paused and appeared to reflect for some instants. At length he replied:

"Indeed I have a vengeance to wreak. Listen to me, Orazio; I'm going to tell you my history. I shall not have to blush before you, for I know you, my friend. Have you not obeyed one commandment of our society, which ordered you to plunge your poniard into the heart of your own brother?"

Orazio here grew pale; a convulsive trembling shook his limbs, and his brow drooped under the sharp glance Gennaro fixed upon him.

"Don't be afraid; you have nothing to fear," quickly resumed the latter, with an indulgent smile; "only I wished to show how far I had the pleasure and honor of knowing you. I even know something more; I know that at first, at that supreme moment, the poniard fell from your hands, and that, if you again raised it to boldly execute the order given, it was because you feared our powerful society, frustrated in its designs, would wreak its vengeance upon you. Well, Orazio, have I spoken the truth?"

"Certainly," stammered the miserable fratricide in his excessive confusion and terror—"certainly. But it was so dark then—how could you know?"

"What's it to you? You see nothing escapes our society. But this, however, has nothing in common with my history. Let us come to the point, then; it seems to me I'll solace my heart in telling you upon whom I wish to revenge myself, and why I've come here. My family is of Neapolitan origin. My happy childhood glided by in the cool and pleasant shade of a villa situated a short distance from that city. My mother's name was Benedetta, my father's Bernardo Bianchi; I was their second son; I've already told you my childhood was careless and happy. Fortune smiled upon us; we had friends. My father passed with good reason for the most eloquent advocate in the city, and every day pleaded several causes brilliantly and successfully. However, this peaceful happiness was not to last long. My father, however honored he was, had enemies. They circulated malevolent rumors, hateful calumnies adroitly, dissimulated about him, and the number of those who esteemed and respected him was not slow to sensibly decrease, while the influx of clients and cases diminished. What could one do under such circumstances? Bring a legal action against the calumniators? But unfortunately, the plot was so carefully woven, the source of the calumnies so cleverly dissembled, that it was impossible to discover it by such means. My father felt himself sinking under the weight of anger and despair; my poor mother, cut to the heart, decayed and languished. Alas, she was not long in succumbing to her suffering. O mother, justly cherished, how much I lost in losing you! Oh! you loved me so much, too tenderly loved perhaps!"

"Our sojourn in our native city had become odious to my afflicted father! Immediately after my mother's death he abandoned it for ever, and came to establish himself in Rome.

"He then attributed, I don't well know why, the infernal calumnies of which he had been the victim to the powerful influence of the secret societies he had always combated with all the power of his eloquence, and hoped to shelter himself from their dreaded sway by establishing himself in the capital of Christendom. Besides, he had bade adieu forever to the labors and duties of his profession, and only wished to pass the rest of his days in the humble tranquility of the domestic hearth.

"As to me, as long as my mother lived, I had remained faithful to the habits of order, prudence, and moderation my parents strove to make me contract from my childhood. But

scarcely was I left to myself than, unfortunately, I made bad acquaintances, and soon abandoned myself to idleness, debauchery, gambling, unbridled licence, and all kinds of excess. One of my new companions, whom I'll content myself with calling Silvio, had then very great influence over me. He was rather tall and weakly looking, his lips pale, thin, and close together, his nose aquiline, his eyes full of fire, and his glances penetrating. Such was the tempter who was to gradually lead me to my ruin. 'Bravo Gennaro! drink fast and play on,' he'd cry to me in his strident voice when by chance, I heaped up notes and gold pieces before me at the gaming table. 'Courage!' he murmured in my ears when fortune had betrayed me. 'Drown your vexation in wine, and then confidence and hope! You must learn to persevere and learn to conquer!' Alas! I followed those counsels and persevered. Very soon I had debts, debts of honor, considerable debts! I hadn't the courage to expose my situation to my father, to confess my delinquencies to him. My father himself, moreover, couldn't have helped me; we were very much reduced, and lived struggling on some of my good mother's savings in prosperous times.

"I saw the abyss open before me, beneath my feet, and I didn't hesitate to plunge deep into it every day. Silvio, my bad genius, wasn't chary of his advice. Despair at last seized me, and I tried to drown my remorse in debauchery and drunkenness, when I saw my creditors, irritated by such a long delay, were going to pursue me,

"One evening, sad and silent, I took refuge in the lower room of a café in the Piazza Navone, when Silvio entered, and, as soon as he saw me, came up.

"Ah, my good Gennaro! he cried 'what has happened to you that you look so very sad.'

"Alas! it's not without reason; I'm very unhappy.'

"Come, tell me. Let me share your troubles,' he continued, resting his sharp glance upon me.

"Well, Silvio, I've debts.'

"Really nothing else?'

"But listen to me now, Silvio; those debts are considerable.'

"And you've no other subject to annoy you, I again repeat?'

"But, Silvio, I have no money.'

"Well, some must be found.'

"It's easy for you to say that, but I'd like to know how.' I replied with some bitterness.

"Money, I assure you, my dear friend, is not so rare. So Gennaro, you want some?" he continued after a pause; "well, come with me, we'll look for it.'

"Where are you taking me?'

"What need you care, provided you're supplied with funds enough, not only to provide for to-day's expenditure, but also for future eventualities?'

"I followed him mechanically. Necessity, fatality, drove me on. Oughtn't I avoid pursuit, prison, shame at any cost?'

"When Silvio had led the way through several streets for a good while, he stopped about the middle of the Via Ripetta before a rather fine-looking house. He rapped and a domestic at once appeared and opened the door.

"Oh! it's you then?" he said, seeing Silvio.

"Yes, you see. But tell me, is he here?" The lackey nodded affirmatively. We followed him, silently traversed a rather large number of passages and corridors, and at last knocked at a carefully closed door.

"Who are you?" was asked from within.

"Friends—faithful unto death!" responded Silvio. And, as if those words had exercised a really magical power, the door turned of its own accord on its hinges, and opened before us.

"In the centre of the apartment into which we entered was placed a long table covered with papers, at which an old man was then seated. A heavy grey moustache shaded his upper lip; his lofty forehead was almost entirely bald; the expression of his face was affable and benevolent, although the glance of his bright black eyes was sharp and piercing.

"Ah! it's you, Gennaro Bianchi," said he as soon as he saw me. 'Well! my lad, you've come at last?'

"At these words of the old man I felt seized with such a profound astonishment that at first I couldn't answer him. How could this stranger who was so completely unknown to me have known my name and my present situation?'

"I leave you with him; the affair will be concluded in an instant," murmured Silvio in my ear.

"The old man nodded assentingly,

"Gennaro Bianchi, he resumed, when we were alone, 'you're just the man we're looking for.'

"I conjure you, signor, explain yourself more clearly," I replied. 'How can you know me, since I don't know you?'

"Do I know you, my young friend?" he replied with a smile. 'For some time I haven't ceased to watch you—to follow you. Stay,' he pursued, handing me a sheet of paper upon which, among a list of names, mine was inscribed,

"I seized the sheet and read,—what should I tell you, Orazio? It was a detailed and perfectly accurate description of my person, character, faults and capacities!'

"You see I know you," continued the old man. 'And now, Gennaro, you want money—don't you?' And his glance, which seemed to go to the very bottom of my soul, rested upon me.

"Assuredly," I murmured, without daring to raise my eyes.

"Don't be uneasy, my friend; you shall have it and on one sole condition. All I ask of you, Gennaro, is that you should consent to enrol yourself in the ranks of our glorious society, devoted to and actually working out, the deliverance of Italy.'

"At those words of the old man, I stepped back,—I trembled with horror. I thought I saw the phantom of my beloved mother suddenly rise before me, imploring and conjuring me to resist this temptation—to fly from this fatal place,

"No, no, never!" I cried. 'If it is on that condition you consent to aid me, let me go!'

"And I dashed towards the door, when the old man, bounding after me, seized me with a vigorous arm that seemed to nail me to the ground.

"Go!" he cried, 'don't think of it, Gennaro. You'll not leave this before you're ours.'

"Let me—let me go!" I cried. 'I'll quit the city; I'll not betray you.'

Here the old man's brow darkened—his glances, hitherto tranquil, assumed a ferocious and menacing expression.

"Maniac!" he cried, placing the barrel of a pistol to my breast, 'silence, or I send a ball to your heart to make certain of your silence!'

"I dropped half fainting upon a chair.

"Gennaro," continued the tempter, re-assuming his sweet, insinuating voice, 'why make such a to-do, why resist so, when it only concerns your legitimate satisfaction and prosperity? Poor child, you know neither the aims nor the intentions of the Carbonari. They are noble sons of Italy—generous, devoted sons, devoting themselves to defending this land of liberty—this common mother.'

In vain he sought to move, to persuade me; I had no longer strength nor wish to answer him.

"Gennaro," he at length resumed, 'select, wretched man, between submission and shame!'

"And yet I still resisted. But the tempter was determined not to let me go. He employed persuasion, remonstrances, threats, promises—everything with infernal tact, with consummate art. Could I resist him, Orazio—I weak, despairing, without strength and without defence? When I departed from that dark abode, I was no longer my own—I was altogether the society's; I was a Carbonaro—I, the son of Bernardo Bianchi, who had sworn an eternal hatred to that powerful association!'

"From that moment a complete revolution took place in my sentiments, in my mind, and in my heart. I had a sister younger than myself—a faithful and living image of our poor mother. Until then, my charming sister had been the object of

my dearest hopes and fondest affection, her joys were my joys, her griefs my griefs; a pleasant smile playing upon her lips and beaming in her eyes was enough to make me forget long days of anguish and misery. In a word, Orazio, I would have given my life a thousand times for Nunziata, my beloved sister; and, likewise, there was nothing in the world dearer to Nunziata than the peace and happiness of her brother Gennaro.

"She was still very young at that time, but had always displayed remarkable sensibility and penetration, as well as uncommon energy. She sounded me at once, but saw nothing in me but some great change that had taken place. Still I made every effort to be always the same to her, and only show her a serene brow and smiling lips. Impossible, Orazio; I carried hell in my breast, remorse gnawed at my heart. Despite myself, I was dull, taciturn, impatient or silent and reserved, even before that loved sister. Oh! what I would not have given to be able to reverse that fatal resolution, to resume my liberty, my tranquility, and my independence! Still impossible; henceforth, I must always march on, always be silent and obey. To withdraw had been to pronounce my death-sentence, for I knew that in case of faltering, revolt or treason, the Carbonaro's poniard was infallibly suspended over my head.

"Forward, then, forward! I resigned myself to my destiny, I stifled my remorse. And yet, before succeeding in hardening my heart, I had a long and painful struggle with myself. Orazio, man is not born for evil; he has to suffer much before abandoning his mind and soul to hell!

"At first, Nunziata was content to follow me with her eyes, to observe me in silence. At last she ventured to ask the reason of the change that took place in me. This question irritated me; I harshly replied that I'd never allow a child to criticise my conduct. Poor Nunziata! she never murmured, but quietly wept in silence. But her tears fell like a weight upon my heart.

"Perhaps Nunziata acquainted my father with the fears she had conceived, for he sent for me, and interrogated me with a severity he had never yet shown towards me. I then lost all self-possession, all respect for paternal authority, declaring I was resolved to no longer brook a needless control and insupportable tutelage.

"It was a last step taken in the bad way, Orazio. I had successively disdained my sister's affection, despised the advice and ignored the authority of my father. What curb could restrain me? My family henceforth saw in me only an immoral young man—a miserable debauchee—and were very far from suspecting I was enrolled in the ranks of a secret society. I took the greatest precautions to prevent my secret from being discovered; my companions, moreover, had strictly enjoined prudence. And yet my father hadn't long to wait to learn that his son was henceforward included in the Carbonari.

"Little by little, I ceased to observe so rigorously all the precautions with which I had until then surrounded myself. Besides, I only went to our meetings about midnight, when everybody under our roof was fast asleep. No one could see me then; at least I supposed so. It is probable, however, the secret of my nightly excursions had not escaped the piercing eye of my sister Nunziata.

"I had quitted the house one night, directing my steps towards the place of our secret meetings where I was to attain to a higher grade at the expense of a new oath, when at the moment of entering the house in the Via Ripetta I saw, at the corner of a bye-street, enveloped in a large mantle, a shadowy figure which seemed to dog me and following at a distance. I turned round and hastened to retrace my steps, desirous on my part of closely examining the unknown one who followed me, but I couldn't discover anything; the spy had disappeared, the street was solitary; no trace of the passage of that shadow was distinguishable, even on the surface of the pavement. Then abandoning my researches, I walked, with a tranquil step, towards our meeting-place, into which I readily penetrated by the aid of the password. The hall was already full; the ceremony began.

"Orazio, I'll never forget that dreadful night. I placed myself in the centre of the hall, accompanied my two witnesses—my dangerous friend Silvio, and another Carbonaro.

"'Do you promise,' the old man who had enrolled me then asked, 'do you promise to labor with all your might and all your power to dethrone Christ and His Church—to efface the name of God Himself from the face of the universe?'

"'I promise.'

"'Do you promise to break all the ties of family, relationship, and nationality that may still retain you?'

"'I promise.'

"'Do you promise to employ all your strength to make—as far as you can—every man his own God and his own master, master also of nature and creation, a free and powerful, strong and pitiless creature, like the serpent of the great forests and the lion of the deserts?'

"'I promise.'

"'Take the oath then.'

And, at these words, the old man, drawing aside a curtain which disclosed to my gaze a kind of altar, pointed out to me a poniard placed upon a marble table in the midst of lighted torches. Upon one of the faces of the triangular blade was engraven this word, 'Fraternity,' upon the second this device, 'Death to tyrants!' and finally upon the third, 'Death to traitors!'

"The old man first put this poniard in my hand; then took it back and placed it upon the altar.

"'Rest the palm of your hand on the point of this poniard,' said he 'and repeat after me the words I am going to say:—I swear to faithfully fulfil all the promises I have made. If ever I break my oath, may this blade, piercing my heart, punish me for it. From this moment I authorise those of the members of this society who shall judge me unfaithful to revenge themselves by striking me, as I shall strike, without regret and without fear, all felons and traitors!'

"I repeated the words of the oath after the initiator; then the old man proclaimed me a friend and brother, impressing a kiss upon my forehead. The last step was taken; I had tumbled into the abyss.

"The morning had scarcely dawned when I returned home, still impressed by the events of the night, sustained and animated by a new exaltation. Besides, inebriation was beginning to produce nervous excitement, for they were not sparing in their libations when a new comrade was to be fêted. I opened the door noiselessly, and glided furtively into my chamber, thinking surely no one had heard me returning at such an early hour in the morning.

"But, at the moment I crossed the threshold, I stood trembling, and, as it were, thunderstruck.

"My father was there, erect and motionless, at the head of my bed. His face was livid, his forehead bathed in perspiration, and he fixed upon me his dark, gleaming eyes.

"At this sight, I recoiled, seized with profound terror.

"'Why do you recoil, Gennaro? Do you no longer recognise your father?' he demanded in a hoarse, hollow voice, whose measured tone and bitter irony made me shudder.

"'What do you mean?' I stammered. 'And why, pray, should I no longer recognize you?'

"'Gennaro,' my father then continued, without answering my question, 'pray where are you coming from now?'

"'I'm coming—after taking a walk,' I replied, assuming a tone of indifference. 'I felt somewhat indisposed to-night, and thought a little excursion in the air—'

"'So, you stopped nowhere?'

"'Nowhere, I assure you.'

"'You lie, wretch,' he said, in a loud, ringing voice. 'You're after being at a meeting of the Carbonari! Henceforth, you belong to that infamous secret society. O misery, O grief, O shame! My son, a Bianchi, is a traitor—my son is a Carbonaro—my son is accursed!'

"'Silence! You lie!' I replied, my blood boiling with shame and fury.

"'I lie, say you!' he replied, with a bitter smile and a bro-

ken-hearted look. 'So my son is not leagued with those infamous Carbonari, he has not inflicted that eternal disgrace upon his father's name, he has not enrolled himself in the ranks of the enemies of his Church, the enemies of his family, the enemies of his country? But if I lie, Gennaro, these papers, however, do not lie,' he continued, showing me a bundle he had taken off the table before him. 'Ah! my son is not a Carbonaro—my son is not an accursed one!'

"I cast a startled look at the manuscript. It contained various plans and secret documents that had been entrusted to me by the society, and which, in my pre-occupation, I had left on the table when leaving home.

"I made a furious bound, like a lion caught in a trap.

"Give me up those papers,' I cried in a voice choking with surprise and terror.

"My father made no reply, but looked at me ironically. I rushed at him, Orazio; I was distracted with rage, and had only one idea, one object—to recover those papers from him.

"The hand of the demon was on me. I flung myself like a madman upon my unhappy father. He wrestled courageously; he struggled to the last, disputing with me the possession of that fatal manuscript.

"Give me up those papers, they are mine,' I cried. And carried away as I was by my blind fury, I gave him such a violent blow in the chest that he immediately reeled backwards and fell inanimate upon the carpet, while a stream of blood spouted from his lips.

"At that moment, my sister, awakened by the noise of the struggle, rushed into the room.

"Gennaro! father! father!' she cried distractedly in a heart-rending voice, and fell unconscious upon the old man's body.

"The spirit of darkness overmastered me at that moment. I had become mad, furious, ferocious. I snatched the papers violently from my dying father's hand, and rushed out of the house I had sullied with the crime of parricide.

"During all that dark day, I wandered through the streets of Rome, unable to find shelter or repose anywhere. When evening came, however, I felt drawn by an irresistible force towards the peaceful hearth I had deluged with blood, and where I was but too soon to learn the result of my crime.

"I had scarcely opened the door when my brother Stefano, severe and menacing, confronted me. My brother's character had always inspired me with profound respect, and even a kind of terror, for he was as wise and prudent as he was resolute and intrepid.

"Gennaro,' said he, in a restrained tone, 'our father died to-day, and, dying, left a supreme recommendation—a last message for you. Will you abandon for ever the fatal society to which you belong?'

"I distinctly refused. Those entreaties, those representations were to have no effect. What arguments could touch the heart of a parricide?

"Well,' my brother concluded, when he had lost all hope of convincing me, 'since you feel neither shame nor remorse for your horrible crime, engage to quit this country; break for ever the ties that still unite you to a family you have forever dishonored, or, if not, I'll deliver you myself into the hands of justice, which will know how to make you expiate your crime. Attend to what I tell you now, Gennaro; up to this, everybody thinks Bernardo Bianchi died of a fit of apoplexy. If you quit this house and this city immediately, your precipitate departure may arouse suspicions. I require you, then, to remain a few days longer with us; it is a precaution due to the honor of our family. Oh!' he continued, looking at me, with a bitter smile, 'I know well that, in acting thus, I'm warming a serpent in my breast, and that some misfortune may happen to us. But I warn you, Gennaro, I've taken precautions against that. In case of murder done by you or your friends, my sister's blood or mine will be immediately avenged. Whereas, if, in a few days, you elect to abandon this country, we promise you to be as silent as the tomb about all that has occurred, so that the honor and reputation of the Bianchi may

remain unblemished in the eyes of the world. Are you resolved, Gennaro? Do you consent to go?'

"Yes, I consent,' I replied, really glad to quit that cursed city.

"It is, indeed, the safest thing,' retorted my brother; 'your hardened heart is henceforth inaccessible to every feeling of remorse, pity, and shame; still, may I have the happiness of finding you some day converted and penitent! Then, Gennaro, but only then, can I offer you my hand, as to a friend, a brother.'

The Carbonaro paused at this part of his story. Even at that moment, the bitterness and acuteness of those mournful memories seemed to make his voice falter and to move his soul.

"I quitted Rome,' he pursued, 'after my father's funeral, and repaired to England, where I was to fulfil a mission with which I had been charged by our Italian brothers. I met Mazzini in London, where I wasn't long in being affiliated to another secret society. It was thenceforward by incessant activity, by continual efforts placed at the service of the cause I had embraced, that I strove to stifle the voice of remorse. I took an infernal pleasure in drawing men out of the safe and regular path, in making other souls—young, generous and pure as mine had been—fall with me into the abyss. A treacherous instinct secretly told me that I should feel solaced when I had succeeded in kindling in other hearts the dull and fatal flame that little by little consumed mine.

"How many sincere men—brave, loyal young men—I have drawn down with me into the bottomless gulf of Freemasonry! And I was proud of my triumph, I rejoiced at their ruin; I laughed at their fall, at the anxieties the present brought them and the evils the future had in store for them.

"I didn't remain long in England. I afterwards repaired to Rotterdam to put myself in communication with the Dutch societies, and from thence to Belgium, where I proposed remaining several years.

"Thanks to the letters of recommendation with which the Italian, English, and Dutch lodges had abundantly supplied me, I wasn't long in entering into relations with a large number of Freemasons belonging to the opulent classes. I went into the elegant society of the cities where I successively resided as professor of music and Italian; my new friends got me pupils, and soon—under the counterfeit name of Tommaso di Rocca-bianca—I passed for a first-class linguist and a musician of high reputation.

"But I took care to add other instructions, other precepts, to those I had to give my pupils. My new profession supplied me with an opportunity of enlisting new adherents in our society, and, while appearing to be engaged in forming linguists or musicians, in reality I was procuring adepts for Freemasonry.

"One of those young men, nevertheless, was not slow to become my master. His name was Ernest Van Dormael, and I confess to you, Orazio, he was really superior to me in many points. It was the ardor, the impetuosity of my passions, that had fatally hurried me on to my ruin. He, Ernest, knew not passion, and seemed even ignorant of ardor. He did evil in cold blood, after having measured the extent and calculated the consequences; and he did it for the pleasure of insulting the Creator, and injuring others. I sometimes heard the harrowing voice of remorse arise within me, and often made vain efforts to escape the dull anguish that tortured my soul. He, Ernest, seemed never to have heard that voice; he pursued his route, marched to his end with complete coldness, calmness, and impassibility.

"I could never entirely banish the idea of God from my mind nor my heart, while my pupil, this new friend, was a confirmed atheist, an atheist penetrated with the most radical principles of universal negation.

"Van Dormael had gradually become my pupil, my friend, my inseparable companion. I experienced a secret satisfaction at the thought of meeting on my way a being more wicked than myself,—and yet he had never assassinated his father!

"Besides, he'd have no need of it. From his childhood, his father had made him a rebel, a sceptic, an atheist.

"'Ernest,' I asked him one day, 'if it were necessary to you to remove an obstacle—a man who was in your way—would you recoil before any act of violence—let us say a murder?'

"'By no means, I assure you,' he coldly replied.

"'But if the man you were to strike was your own father?'

"'Well, what of that?' he replied, with the same coldness. 'Still,' he continued with an infernal smile, 'assassination is a clumsy process, to which it would be difficult to tempt me to have recourse, because it rarely succeeds. Believe me there are other ways by which one strikes harder and revenges himself more safely.'

"So you see, Orazio, I had found my master. But I return to my friend, Van Dormael. His chosen weapon was calumny, with which he excelled, and with which he destroyed and blackened at pleasure his friends and adversaries. Still, he employed it oftenest, not so much against private persons as against entire classes, whom he rendered suspected or obnoxious in public opinion, placing them in a false light. This was so much the more easy to him, as he had access to the columns of several journals in which his infernal malignity and cleverness, his great command of style and rare power of invention, enabled him to pour poison, gall and mud upon the wounds his scathing darts had caused and which nothing could cure. Above all he attacked with most violence, fury and acrimony, the men and things of God—religion and its ministers. Besides, he had been one of the founders of the society of the Solidaires. Such, in fine, was the friend I was to meet in Belgium, and who was undoubtedly sent to me by hell.

"He presented me in all the circles in which he habitually moved, in the recommendable houses in which he was received, and, thanks to him, I was not slow to become acquainted with the Morren family, of whom I shall have occasion to speak.

"The head of the family was a loyal *libre penseur*, an old, obstinate *philosophe* who proudly pretended to keep his reason strong and free, independent of every prejudice and exempt from all restraint. Despite all our efforts and all our persuasions, he had firmly refused to submit to the yoke of Freemasonry, which he said had only bonds and slavery to offer him, as displeasing and unacceptable in every respect as those the precepts of Christianity could impose upon him. But, for the rest, we knew well that, though refusing to join, he would never oppose us; so we were content to see him remain as he was—independent *philosophe*, obstinate *libre penseur*.

"But as to his son Victor, whom old Morren left entirely free to select the faith and dogmas that suited him, and who was educated under the eyes of a pious mother, he opposed an obstinate and absolute resistance to all our efforts, all our solicitations, despite our zeal and perseverance. We were even quite resolved to leave him thenceforward in peace, when a fortuitous circumstance occurred, which changed the indifference I had until then felt towards Victor into a deadly, implacable hatred.

"One we met at the old *philosophe's* one of his nephews, a mad devotee, who had come to tell his uncle of his engagement in the Pontifical army and his departure for Italy. Our projects, our hopes, the grand and holy cause of fatherland then came in question; I defended it as long and as well as I could. But, being quite out of myself in a strange house, I was at last, by courtesy, constrained to beat a retreat before that Joseph, that young maniac whom his cousin Victor supported; and I left that house in a state of indescribable rage and fury.

"Unfortunately, that was not all. That young bigot, Joseph had prevailed on his cousin Victor to accompany him, and the old *philosophe* foolishly allowed his son to carry out his resolution. I then decided to abandon Belgium and return to Rome, where I hoped to find an opportunity of pon-

dering those two dreamers.

"Indeed, I wasn't long in meeting Victor in Rome. It was him, him particularly I wished to strike. If I were lucky enough to see him fall under my poniard, I could easily abandon his friend to one of my accomplices. I easily prevailed upon my victim to accompany me for a walk outside the city walls; I had already led him to a solitary place where I could strike him and a dagger was gleaming above his head, when suddenly my brother Stefano placed himself between me and my revenge.

"At first, I was tempted to assassinate him, too; it was impossible; there were then two against me—Stefano, courageous and strong as a lion, and Victor, ever calm and brave. My brother wishing, before all, to protect the honor of the family, violently reproached me in our Neapolitan dialect, not easily understood by a stranger. He reminded me of my crime, of the solemn promise I made to him and which I had infringed, asked me if my heart was forever closed to every sentiment of justice, shame, and repentance, and at last threatened to deliver me up to justice if I didn't as quickly as possible quit the city and the Roman territory.

"From that moment, my hatred of Victor naturally only increased; rage, vexation, the bitter feelings of abortive revenge inspired all my acts and boiled in my breast. I took a solemn oath to wipe away my shame in the blood of my enemy at any cost, and wherever I'd have to follow him.

"I had met at Rome, Silvio, the bad genius, the infernal tempter, who had formerly corrupted my youth. I had pointed out my victim to him and he had promised me to make him promptly acquainted with the point of his poniard. But, unfortunately, the pursuit of the police constrained him to withdraw from Rome before he could find an opportunity of keeping his promise.

"As for me, I hastened to fly that fatal city, whose very walls seemed to salute me with the name of parricide. First, I joined Garibaldi's bands, hoping under their flags to find an opportunity of wreaking the vengeance so long awaited; but when I learned that the Piedmontese were going to invade the Pontifical frontiers at several points, I hastened to enrol myself in their ranks, hoping at last to meet my enemy face to face."

Gennaro here finished his story, which Orazio had silently and attentively listened to. The Piedmontese soldier, however hardened he might have been, felt penetrated with fear and surprise at the recital of the adventures and crimes of his new companion.

As to Gennaro, his countenance, his gestures, his attitude betrayed no other sentiment than that of a ferocious hope and infernal joy at the approach of that decisive day when he was at last going to have an opportunity of striking his enemy.

"Orazio" he resumed, in a grave tone, after a few instants' silence, "I'd never have made such disclosures to you if I hadn't, first of all, to ask a service of you. You've understood it—haven't you? I must wreak a double vengeance on the persons of these madmen. Joseph, like Victor, must die. Henceforth, I'll taste neither repose nor happiness until I've seen their accursed blood flow and their two corpses stiffen before me. My friend, will you help me to accomplish this work, this useful and glorious vengeance?"

"Undoubtedly," replied the Piedmontese. "But how shall I recognise your two foreign Zouaves in the confusion of the battle?"

"Don't trouble yourself about nothing; it is I—I alone—who take upon myself to meet them, were they concealed in the bowels of the earth, at the bottom of hell itself! Don't embarrass yourself my friend; leave that to my vengeance. And yet," he pursued in a sinister tone, "Once already, O sorrow, that vengeance has escaped me! But what matter? A secret presentiment arises within me and reanimates me. To-morrow, to-morrow, for me revenge or death! Yes, I'll know how to find them; we shall meet—it is I who tell you. Then, you'll take care of Joseph; but Victor—Victor is mine alone! Let him tremble; he shall die to-morrow!"

CHAPTER XII.

CASTELFIDARDO.

It was the 18th of September, 1860. The heroes of Castelfidardo were at last about to hail the dawn of the holy day, the day of martyrdom. The General-in-Chief of the Pontifical troops, after serious consideration, had determined, if they could, to open a way through the enemy's forces in order to reach Ancona by the coast.

Alas ! only that chance of safety remained, and that, too, accompanied by many obstacles.

First, their valiant little army had to cross the Musone, a little river that rises in the mountains to the north of Loreto, and extends towards the south in the direction of the sea into which, swollen with the waters of another river, the Aspio, it flows. Both these rivers have very steep banks.

Deep, narrow valleys, intersected by drains and covered with timber, stretch along both banks of the Musone, while, quite near the junction of the two rivers, opens out a plain about three miles in extent. At this very spot, the mountain that crowns the village of Castelfidardo divides, separating the valleys through which both rivers flow, the Musone watering one side, the Aspio the other. On the western slope of this mountain, and nearly opposite the church and town of Loreto, are the two large farms of Cascino and Crocetto, around which all the fury of the fight was to concentrate itself.

All the environs of Loreto, the mountains and valleys, swarmed with Piedmontese troops. On the Gamberans side those troops occupied the summits, and, consequently, commanded the valley. Moreover, they had seized upon the bridge that unites both banks of the Musone, and established several batteries there to hinder access to it.

About half-past eight on the morning of the 18th, the first division of the Pontifical troops formed in columns, and began its march under the orders of General Pimodan. The second division was to follow at nine.

The right bank of the Musone was not occupied. The general and his brave men soon had crossed that little river; and scarcely had this valiant column planted the last piece of artillery at the other side, when the general ordered his troops to take possession of the two farms occupied by the Piedmontese on the heights of Castelfidardo. Fiery, irresistible, and rapid as the lightning, the Zouaves rush to the attack, supported and accompanied by about a hundred of the Irish light infantry and the advanced guard of the Roman infantry. They charge up the mountain under an incessant shower of shells and bullets, fall upon the Piedmontese bersaglieri, overthrow and repulse them, and make a hundred of them prisoners, including one officer. Then they hasten to place two pieces of cannon on the height to provide against a fresh attack, and plant two howitzers under the guard of Lieutenant Daudier before the house itself.

Four cannons and two howitzers of Richter's battery had been placed on the top of the Castelfidardo hill. From that elevated post, Colonel Blumenstille directed a murderous fire on the enemy's army, while the valiant Daudier, by his courage as much as by his strategical knowledge, made up for any insufficiency in the Pontifical artillery. Colonel Richter, who had been struck by a Piedmontese bullet, had nevertheless refused to abandon his post on the field of honor.

But the moment had come to attack the second farm. Pimodan gave the word of command in a loud firm voice, and his valiant little troop began to march. But, alas ! it did not foresee the number and gravity of the obstacles it was to surmount. In the wood those brave fellows were to traverse, an entire army blocked the way. At their approach a hailstorm of bullets, cannon-ball, and grapeshot suddenly showers down on them from the enemy's ranks placed out of reach in the depths

of the thickets, and decimates and crushes them so powerfully and so furiously that they are almost immediately constrained to retreat.

The enemy, seeing them recoil, emerges from the wood and advances. But suddenly the heroic battalion faces about, steadily awaits the Piedmontese, directs against them a murderous and well-sustained fire, and with revived ardor rushes upon and attacks them with the bayonet. Cialdini's soldiers, astonished at this heroic resistance of an enemy very inferior in numbers, falter, hesitate, recoil, and at last leave Pimodan's soldiers sole masters of the ground so valiantly reconquered.

But their gallant general is wounded ; his face is pale and gaunt ; the blood is flowing from his forehead. Still he keeps at the head of the column.

"Forward, my lads !" he cries. "Forward brave soldiers !"

"Long live Pimodan !" they all unanimously respond with a burst of enthusiasm.

"Don't shout," he replies, "but still advance !"

At that moment a bullet shatters his right arm ; he at once seizes his sword in his left hand.

"Forward, my lads ! God is with us !" he continually repeats.

Near him, Colonel Beedelievre, on foot, in the midst of his men, quietly folding his arms, gives his orders with admirable coolness and perfect tranquility.

For the third time the Zouaves attack the farm, and for the third the heroic Pimodan receives a bullet that lays half open his leg.

"Young men, God is with us ! Courage, still onward !" he repeats, as, stiff and motionless in his saddle, he precedes them.

But the Piedmontese, in still more compact and numerous ranks, thronged round these brave men. The Zouaves fought desperately, like heroes, facing the enemy like lions entrapped ; but the cavalry and the Swiss, essaying a murderous fire, had retreated in disorder, and re-descended into the plain.

The brave Daudier alone remained at the entrance of the first farm ; all his soldiers (writes his noble companion, Tresvaux de Fraval) were dead or dispersed. A cannon was abandoned at about fifty paces from the enemy.

"Help, Tresvaux ! Let us save the cannon !" cried the heroic officer. Tresvaux rushed forward, followed by Le Camus, Saint-Brieuc, and another of their gallant compatriots. And under a shower of bullets they detach the cannon, drag it to the edge of the rocks, hurl it down the declivity to the bottom of the valley, and then, intrepid and resolute, rejoin their companions.

The fight becomes furious, confused, and the battle rages. On one side, two hundred brave fellows who will not recoil and are ready to die ; on the other, hordes of Piedmontese, who seem to rise out of the ground at every instant, still more numerous, still more savage. And yet those two hundred heroes still fight with the same valor, the same ardor. But, alas ! there are gaps in their ranks at every fresh attack.

Still Pimodan, whom nothing discourages, orders a fresh assault. But at that instant, a fourth bullet, striking him on the right side, traverses the body and comes out on the left. This time the wound was mortal.

"Renneville," said he to his aid-de-camp—then, for the first time, tottering in his saddle—"I'm dying ; go on my part, and get together our infantry."

Among the heroic soldiers of Castelfidardo was the gallant Ernest Maestraeten, a young medical student of the University of Louvain. "During the entire fight," he wrote subsequently to his parents from the prison of Alessandria, "I had two duties to discharge—that of surgeon and that of sergeant. Our ambulance was stationed at about five hundred paces from the line of battle. I was incessantly going from my battalion to my hospital, according to circumstances, transporting a wounded comrade, firing my gun, charging with the bayonet, or dressing wounds ; in a word, doing whatever came to my

hand and was most pressing."

The general, who was losing all his blood, flowing through five wounds, was borne to the care of this young and gallant Belgian, who had obtained the assistance of another physician. But at the very moment when the two doctors were going to dress the general's wounds, they saw the Pontifical troops falling back in disorder, abandoning the field of battle to the victorious Piedmontese. Maestraeten's companion saw the danger.

"Let us fly, my friend. It is time to go," he cried in extreme terror.

"I go? Never!" replied the noble young man. "I'll never abandon the general nor our poor wounded."

But, without answering, his colleague hastened to escape. "I need scarcely tell you he wasn't a Belgian," observed Maestraeten, writing to his parents. And the young Zouave, himself slightly wounded, alone remained with his dying general and his mutilated companions—a prey to acute sufferings.

The ambulance then presented a truly heart-rending spectacle. There were about thirty wounded officers and privates in it; those who were first brought in had their wounds washed and dressed; the others were waiting their turn. Blood flowed on all sides, pain and delirium wrung piercing cries even from those heroic combatants—those martyrs in a good cause.

To crown their misfortunes, the Piedmontese were not slow to surround the house. Then those self-styled soldiers of civilization, who were pleased to accuse the Pontifical volunteers of cruelty and perfidy, signalized themselves by strange and odious conduct. Although the black flag adopted by the ambulance had been hoisted on the housetop, those ferocious assailants, rushing to all the outlets, fired through the door and the windows upon the unfortunate wounded, repeating those atrocious volleys—which, rather badly directed, however, produced little effect—ten times. But all hope was lost, and those heroic remnants of an army of heroes, fainting and abandoned, were constrained to surrender.

The illustrious Pimodan, whom Bresciani justly compares to Judas Machabeus, made no allusion to the gravity of his condition, and awaited death with admirable calmness. At his request, Cialdini consented that the young Maestraeten should remain by him to the last.

And, alas! the end of that hero was very near. "The general suffered cruelly," wrote one of the young Belgian prisoners a few days later, "but did not cease for an instant to bear his sufferings with the patience, courage, and resignation of a martyr. Exhausted by pain and the loss of blood pouring through five wounds, he drew his last breath a little before midnight." God had crowned His soldier, and summoned him to heaven to make him partaker of His glory.

The General-in-Chief of the Pontifical troops tried, however, to rally the straggling and scattered fugitives who jostled each other on the battle field. He had vainly striven to form them into a battalion behind the stone fence and around the farm, where they were protected from the ravages of the artillery. But he could not succeed in reforming them, and had to order what troops remained to retire behind the heights of Musone, and cross the river in the direction of Umana. These dispositions having been made, he returned to the farm where he was to clasp, for the last time, the hand of his friend, the noble Pimodan.

"General," said the dying man then, "they have fought like heroes; the Church's honor is safe—Farewell!"

Lamoricière next ordered the retreat to be sounded; then, as the farm of Crocetto could no longer be defended, he charged Colonel Condenhoven to hunt up the troops who still remained there, and direct them up towards the river, making every effort to save at least the heavy artillery. These latter combatants covering the retreat in the battle field, fought with the courage of lions and the vigor of athletes. Soon, of the twenty-two last defenders of the Crocetto farm, only eight remained—all the others having been wounded; but those eight

for a whole hour defended that perilous post against the reiterated attacks of an entire Piedmontese column.

A few steps from them those eight heroes saw the bundles of straw and fagots in the granary blaze up to the top of the grange. The last breath of wind might blow those burning sparks to the roof of the farm and scatter them among them, and yet they wavered not, but still fought on. Their incessant volleys thundered one after another, and every shot brought down an enemy.

"Ha! look out there!" cried the Zouave d'Hont, and the Sardinian rolled on the ground, drowned in blood, and thus twenty-one Piedmontese fell one after another.

Their guns burned their hands, and might at any moment explode, killing themselves. But before them the dead and dying lay heaped upon the farm-yard, and they continued to spread around them in terror and damage. They were surely swayed by the spirit of war, by the genius of vengeance, those eight heroes with faces blackened with powder and perspiration, eyes glaring, lips compressed, and chests heaving.

Suddenly a discharge of artillery resounded and tore away half the roof. A cannon ball falls in the middle of the room; the floor shakes, the wall crumble, a torrent of flames and clouds of smoke burst through the opening. The Piedmontese, despairing of reducing this little handful of heroes by force, had set fire to the roof that sheltered them.

"Surrender! surrender!" they cried out to them on all sides.

"Rather die a thousand times!" replied Le Camus and Tresvaux, discharging their pieces through the windows of the burning house.

But the fire is spreading, the flames coil upwards, the beams crackle, and the walls burst assunder. At this sight the wounded cannot repress a feeble groan.

Rage then gave place to pity in the hearts of the valiant Zouaves; they wave a white handkerchief, knotted round the butt-end of a gun, through one of the windows. The Piedmontese cease firing, and the Zouaves, placing the wounded on their shoulders, emerge from the ruins of the crumbling house. They then glance around them, looking for their comrades, their generals, the remainder of the army; no more traces of them, no more hope—the Pontifical camp was completely destroyed. "At least our honor is safe," they all cried together; "and blessed be our dead—they repose in the Lord."

Thus ended that glorious combat, of which, strange to say, all the honor reverts to the martyrs, to the vanquished, to the defenders of the persecuted faith, while, since that day, an ineffaceable stain remains on the hands and brows of the conquerors.

Moreover, the illustrious General-in-Chief of the Pontifical army had, despite all, succeeded in carrying into execution his bold and ingenious project. Collecting around him the debris of his valiant little army, he had cut his way through the enemy's ranks, and before nightfall was safe under the walls of the fortress of Ancona.

"When Lamoricière saw that all was lost, he hastened to gather us all around him," writes M. Résimont, a young cavalry officer, on the subject of that brilliant retreat. "Until then we had remained in our ranks on the field of battle; but as soon as the order was given we filed off, two by two, and galloped rapidly away, to prevent the enemy cutting off our retreat. The road we took was impracticable for cavalry, but at that moment such slight obstacles didn't stop us. We flung the reins to our horses, which bounded over streams, hedges and ditches; and yet, to my great astonishment, there were only three or four riders unhorsed and flung from their saddles. Still, they escaped any serious accident, and got off with the loss of their head stalls.

"The Piedmontese had already occupied the heights by which, if the battle was in our favor, he would have withdrawn in the direction of Ancona. Nothing remained for us, then, but to follow the shore road; and soon an entire regiment of Sardinian lancers, charged with cutting off our retreat, galloped

upon our heels. Despite everything, we sought to continue our route, but we had hardly gone a few paces when we found ourselves taken between two fires. All resistance was impossible. What could a weak handful of combatants, opposed to an entire army, attempt? We closed up our ranks, then, behind the General, and, abandoning the road, fled to the mountains. But at that place the route became totally impracticable—no road, no pathway. We were obliged to dismount and lead our horses by the bridle through thickets and gorges, slopes and ravines. Nevertheless, after about an hour's march, we reached the Convent of the Camaldolese, where the dull and distant booming of the bombardment of Ancona reached us from time to time. At that moment our situation seemed desperate. Our retreat was obstructed by the enemy's troops; it might be that Ancona, the only port of safety that then remained to us, was likewise blockaded from the land. Still, forward! forward! Such was the word of command of our illustrious captain. Our enthusiasm revived, and success crowned our efforts; we arrived without any impediment."

Meanwhile, the second division of the Pontifical army—that which began to march later, and had no occasion to take part in the fight—had retired under the walls of Loreto; and the pious edifice dedicated to Mary was, at that hour, encumbered with the wounded and dying. That very morning those heroes had come there to seek divine grace, succor, strength to meet their bloody martyrdom; they had now returned thither, bleeding and mutilated, to ask the Heavenly Consolatrix to procure them grace to remain patient and faithful to the end. Noble and courageous soldiers, chosen combatants of Christ, who had united the strength of the lion to the meekness of the dove!

For their heroic courage had excited the admiration of their enemies themselves. "Those troops," wrote General Cialdini, in a report to General Cacchiari, "attacked us with superb enthusiasm and real fury." The fight, it is true, was short, but bloody and desperate."

And besides, the generosity, the tender compassion of those valiant soldiers has been attested by numerous testimonies. "Alas!" said one of them to his companion, in the heat of the battle, "I'd never have the courage to aim at that poor young Piedmontese I saw yonder. Look; he's so young; no doubt he has a mother—a mother who will wear mourning for him. No, no; I'd not have the strength to kill him."

And yet victory had been denied to such magnanimous efforts, such pure devotion! The storm was over now, it is true; but the poor flowers, crushed and bent down, strewed the soil.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE CARBONARO'S REVENGE AND THE CHRISTIAN'S VENGEANCE.

Victor and his two companions distinguished themselves by their coolness and courage during their entire action. They were in the same company and fought side by side.

The robust Fleming, Martin, made many an enemy bite the dust, not with his sabre, but simple with his enormous fist, while using his gun to cast destruction and death in the ranks of his adversaries. Victor and Joseph took aim and fired with a precision so exact and a self-possession so remarkable, that each of their shots brought down an enemy.

The three friends at that moment seemed endowed with supernatural strength. In vain the balls and bullets whizzed over their heads; they appeared to see nothing, hear nothing, and applied all their strength, attention and ardor to repulsing the enemy. Often, isolated groups, small detachments of Piedmontese *tirailleurs*, attacked the three valiant companions, over whom they hoped to gain a very easy victory, but those assailants were always received with a murderous fire, which forced them to retreat.

And yet our three friends were at last compelled to yield to

superior numbers and join their companions, who were beginning to beat a retreat. Martin withdrew slowly, step by step, as if he could not make up his mind to abandon the advanced post he had valiantly conquered. But when at length he rejoined them, he was suddenly astonished and startled at not seeing his two friends.

"Joseph! Victor!" he cried out, in his distress, bitterly reproaching himself, "I've broken my promise, I've abandoned you! Oh, mother, mother, mother, shall I no longer be allowed to watch over them, to keep my word to you?"

And the unhappy Martin, in his excessive grief, wandered hither and thither over the battlefield, forgetful of danger and exposing his life twenty times, seeking to fulfil the duty his mother's will had imposed upon him.

Joseph and Victor were indeed separated from their companions in the confusion and tumult of the retreat. At length they reached the borders of the wood in whose shade they were out of the reach of the enemy's fire, when Joseph, stopping to take breath, saw two Piedmontese soldiers following, and, at that moment on the point of reaching them. Thenceforward, flight was impossible and had been shameful. Why, moreover, decline the combat? Their numbers were equal.

"To arms, Victor!" said Joseph, "we are pursued!"

But before they could assume the defensive, the two Piedmontese rushed upon them, sword in hand.

"Ah! cowards! bigots!" they cried on their fury, "we have you at last—the hour of vengeance!"

At the same instant blades leaped to light out of their scabbards and sabres crossed. The profoundest silence reigned in the wood around them; only one might hear from time to time in the distance a solitary shot from the Piedmontese camp.

Gennaro had attacked Victor; Orazio, struggling vigorously, sought to disarm Joseph. But the two young Zouaves defended themselves well, like good and brave soldiers. Joseph, on his guard, parried with marvellous dexterity all the strokes of Orazio's sword, which, formidable as it was, could not draw a drop of blood from his courageous adversary.

But it was a furious, desperate combat between Gennaro and Victor. All the ruses, all the efforts of the Carbonaro were in vain. His eyeballs, swollen with fury, became bloodshot, his face livid, his lips pale, firmly compressed, only parted painfully from time to time to emit a hollow groan.

However, the courageous Victor, who continued fighting, began to gradually lose both his vigor and energy. He was ready to succumb to fatigue and heat, after the arduous trials of that day of combat, and the indomitable ardor that had animated him on the field of honor, as long as he was fighting for the holy cause of the Church, seemed to abandon him little by little when the young Zouave was only fighting in his own defence, and, if fate favored him, to plunge his adversary's soul into eternal torments. Alas! was his life so dear, so sweet so precious to him, that he should seek to preserve it by expressing that misguided, that impious, that miserable enemy to eternal damnation.

Suddenly, the Carbonaro, having thoughtlessly sprung forward, lost his equilibrium and fell heavily upon the ground. In an instant Victor's arm was raised, and Victor's sabre gleamed over his head. All at once he stopped.

"Oh, Stefano, Nunziata!" he murmured, "could I assassinate your brother?"

But the enraged Carbonaro had already arisen. He had heard the exclamation of his generous vanquisher, and those noble words only redoubled his hate and rage.

"One of us two must die, and die here!" he cried.

And in a paroxysm of rage he rushed at his noble adversary, who, exhausted, irresolute, overpowered by fatigue, defended himself with difficulty. The hour so longed for—the hour of vengeance—had come at last!

The other two combatants seemed to redouble their efforts. Orazio had received a large, deep wound, but the sight of his blood only aroused his mettle and redoubled his fierceness. The point of his sword darted hither and thither, like a flash of lightning, menacing the young Van Dael on all sides. Sud-

denly a rush of blood suffused the face of the young hero; the sword of the Piedmontese had touched his forehead. Joseph wavered for an instant, but was not slow to resume the defensive. At that moment, a loud cry suddenly resounded at his side; then he heard a dual shout, a dreadful shock; unfortunate Orazio, as if thunderstruck, fell at his feet, his head fractured, and vomiting torrents of blood. Martin's stout fist had done its work.

Gennaro looked aside, saw his companion stretched on the ground, and trembled. Was his last joy, his revenge, going to escape him, too? He then put forth all his strength, all his rage, in a supreme effort; with a bound he dashes at Victor, who had turned aside, occupied and distracted by this novel incident in the struggle. And the young Zouave, taken unawares, has let his arm drop, and the Carbonaro's poniard is plunged in his breast. Victor has uttered a cry; he puts his hand to his side, grows pale, totters, falls.

But Martin has heard that cry of anguish, and bounds forward.

"Ah! coward!" he cries, "ah! brigand, ah! assassin! Now it's thy turn!"

And he falls with all his strength upon the Carbonaro, who lunges forward to give his victim the last thrust. And, felled by that powerful hand, Gennaro falls backward and rolls upon the ground, stunned by the shock. But it was only a slight blow; he rises at once and springs with rage at his new adversary.

Joseph, meanwhile, hastened to help Victor, forgetting the pain of his wound—rather light one, however, for Orazio's sword had only grazed the flesh. But the unfortunate Victor lay unconscious upon the ground, motionless and perhaps lifeless. The blood that spouted from his wound reddened the ground around him and saturated his clothes.

"Victor, dear Victor!" cried Joseph, weeping. "Oh! wake up. Must I see you die so painful a death!" And he tried to bandage the wound with his handkerchief, and stop the blood which gushed from a large hole in the breast, near the region of the heart.

Martin and Gennaro, foaming and furious, and interlaced like two serpents, continued to struggle desperately. The Italian, feeling his strength going, felt for his poniard in his breast; at last his trembling fingers met the handle and drew it out of the scabbard. Already the glittering blade gleamed over the valiant Zouave's head. But Martin has disengaged his right hand; he sees the flashing steel glitter before his eyes, summons all his strength, raises his formidable fist, and Gennaro, stricken with a mortal stroke, totters and falls to the ground in the midst of a stream of blood. The giant has sent him to rejoin his victim.

"Our poor friend is avenged," said he then to Joseph, mopping his forehead.

"Silence!" murmured the latter. And both, attentive to Victor's slightest movement, leaned over him and examined his wound. For some instants they hold their breath and listen attentively. O happiness! they have heard the indistinct murmur of his weak and broken breathing.

"O my God, my God, I thank Thee!" cries Joseph, rapturously. "He lives, he lives—perhaps he will be saved. Oh! let us implore the holy Mother of God in his favor. She can save him—that good and loving Mary."

And the two young men, hardly out of danger, knelt down humbly, with faces turned towards the Holy House of Loreto, and for some instants remained motionless, with clasped hands and an expression of ardent and profound fervor.

But their prayer was short, and when they had ended they hastened to lavish their cares on their unfortunate friend. First, Martin ran to the stream that flowed hard by at the base of the mountain to draw water to bathe the temples and forehead of Victor, who gradually revived.

"Where am I?" he murmured at last, in a broken voice, slowly opening his eyes, and still looking cautiously about him. Suddenly he shuddered, for his glance encountered the corpse of Gennaro stretched upon the blood-soaked grass.

"O poor, unhappy, misguided Gennaro," he cried, weeping. "O Stefano, Nunziata, you've lost your brother!" And speaking thus, he tried to crawl on his feet and hands towards the poor wretch's body. In vain his companions wanted to draw him aside.

"Oh! don't hold me, I beg!" he repeated, "but rather assist me. Perhaps there is yet time; his soul, my God, his soul!"

In fact, a painful rattling in the throat from time to time raised the chest of Gennaro, who seemed gradually coming to life.

"O my good Joseph, and you, Martin, help me, I beg," cried Victor, in his anguish. "He lives, he lives, my God, and I'm not avenged."

And, by an effort, he succeeded in getting on his feet, to get near him. His two friends dashed after him, seeking to restrain him.

"Victor, Victor,!" they said, "let him lie there, I beg. It's too late—think first of your own safety."

"But his soul! Think of his soul," repeated the noble young man.

Then he knelt on the grass quite near the dying man.

"Gennaro, my friend," he said, in his gentle voice.

"Who calls me? Who speaks to me thus?" replied the wounded man, in a weak voice. "Who calls himself the friend of a wretch, an exile?"

"I'm your friend—Victor. Don't you recognize me, Gennaro?"

"Victor!" repeated the Italian, choked with anger. "Victor, say you? You lie—I've killed him, your Victor. Now, let me die in peace; I've got my revenge at last."

"You're wrong, Gennaro. God has spared my life in arresting your sword, and here I am near you to sustain you."

At these words the Carbonaro opened wide his dull eyes, and fixed them for an instant on the young man's face.

"Are you really Victor?" he murmured. "But no—he exists no longer; I've killed him. It's his ghost that returns from the region of the dead to snatch my soul from me. Back, horrible spectre, back, back, cursed vision! Oh! it oppresses, it stifles me! Am I, then, going to die?"

And, at these words, a stream of dark blood spouted from the lips of the poor wretch, whose drooping head fell backwards.

"O my God, my God!" sighed Victor; "he's going to appear before Thee, and he dies unrepentant!" And clasping his hands, he burst into tears at this terrible thought.

Joseph and Martin, terrified and motionless, silently regarded this mournful spectacle. Quite near them lay the bloody body of the miserable Orazio. But if their glances could have beheld the radiant world of spirits, they would doubtless have seen the good angels of heaven moved, in the midst of a respectful silence, at Victor's noble devotion and sublime vengeance.

For the second time the young Zouave bent over the body of the unfortunate man.

"Gennaro, my friend, my brother, the Lord calls you, invites you to repentance," said he, in a suppliant voice.

"The Lord?" replied the dying man, bitterly. "Yes, I see it now. But He does not call me; He curses, He threatens me. He holds His thunderbolts ready. He's going to plunge me forever into hell!"

"Undeceive yourself, Gennaro. If He threatens you, it is to invite you to repentance and penance."

"No, no, it is too late," he replied. "There is no more pardon or repentance for me. I have hated and blasphemed all sacred things; I am now damned; let me die in peace."

"But, Gennaro, think of your noble brother, of your beloved sister Nunziata!"

"Don't utter their names. I see them—they are serpents; they have stung me; they have driven me from my home and plunged me into the abyss."

"Gennaro, think, at least, of your venerable father, of the pious mother who—"

"Ah! ah! my father, indeed," interrupted the wretch, with a burst of hellish laughter. "My father, yes, I see him—The blood streams from his face, his lips, his breast—And he collects that blood in his hand and flings it in my face. My father, say you? Know you, then, who assassinated him? Well, it was I, Gennaro, the damned one! Don't you see the bluish bloody stain that soils his breast? Well, it was I who struck him—assassinated others, too—many others," continued the unhappy being, a prey to dreadful delirium. "There—hold, along side my father—here's Victor Mor en. He died by my hand. Look—he uncovers his breast, and from his breast, his lips, his eyes, burst forth flames! Flames and fire everywhere! All that's to consume me!"

And the miserable parricide wrung his hands despairingly, uttering hollow groans and cries of rage and pain, and rolled convulsively on the grass, reddened by the streams of blood that flowed from his wound.

At the sight of this appalling spectacle, not one of our three friends could retain his tears. Victor wept bitterly; Joseph and Martin covered their faces with their hands to conceal their emotion, and withdrew in horror from the miserable dying creature.

"All human succor is henceforth useless," murmured Victor sadly. "O my friends, let us pray. My God, don't let him die before I'm avenged!"

And all three, turning towards the Holy House, began to pray. The dying man was already breathing his last sighs and uttering his last groans; the fatal instant was near.

"Oh brother, may you one day be able to forestall, were it only for a single instant, the terrible hour of justice!" Nunziata had said to the guilty Gennaro. But could such an impious one as he receive that gift of the Supreme Mercy? No doubt he was very far from having merited it; but the heavenly goodness of the Lord is unbounded.

The dying man suddenly opened his eyes. He seemed at that instant to be animated with new strength. It was the last spark of life that scintillated, the last moment of hope before the end—before death.

The Carbonaro cast an anxious and wandering look about him; but with an expression less ferocious and despairing.

"What have I done, then?" he murmured, raising himself with difficulty upon his knees, and resting on his elbow. "Oh heaven!" he cried, after a moment's horrifying silence, "Oh heaven, I'm an assassin—I have put an innocent man to death!"

At these words he tried to hide to hide himself from view, to conceal his face, but his hand fell heavy and nerveless by his side. Victor, moved even to tears, tremblingly approached him. There seem to be a ray of hope in the poor wretch's last words. He tenderly pressed his already icy hand, and held it in his arms.

"Hope, hope, my friend," he murmured, in his gentle, tender voice. "You haven't killed me—look, I'm here, alongside of you, quite ready to lavish my care upon you, to offer you my pardon."

"What! You can pardon me! Impossible!" And those words, interrupted by the death rattle, issued spasmodically from Gennaro's lips. "But even if you would, what use would be your pardon? God does not pardon lost souls—damned souls like mine!"

"Be silent, unhappy man. Don't blaspheme, Gennaro. I, who am only a miserable sinner, pity and pardon you! Oh, brother, undeceive yourself; that omnipotent God, on the contrary, only waits for a sigh, a tear, a sign of true repentance, to overwhelm you with love, to admit you to His bosom as a long lost child returned to his father's hearth. O! Gennaro, Gennaro, don't shut your heart to the voice of His love!"

"My God, my God, should it indeed be possible?" cried the unhappy man, palpitating, distracted, while bitter tears, rolled down his cheeks and fell upon his breast. "And you will pardon me, too—you whom I have hated, persecuted, alas! unto death!"

"I forgive you with all my heart," said Victor, in a moving tone. (Give me your hand, brother.)

"Oh! no, no, it's a soiled hand. Just now it was bathed in thy blood," he replied, drawing back his hand with a terrified gesture.

But Victor had already seized it, held it in his, and covered it with tears and kisses.

And the heart of the guilty one was touched; divine charity had at last triumphed over hellish hate; the hour of grace had, for an instant, forestalled the hour of justice, as Nunziata had hoped.

But at that very moment death came to claim his prey.

"Victor, oh, good Victor," gasped Gennaro, "I'm dying—friend—forgive—pray for me—for an unhappy sinner. Forgive, forgive, father. And tell Stefano—Nunziata—that I beg them to forgive me—that I—O my God—and you—Jesus—Mary!"

And the poor wretch's drooping head fell back. Victor tremblingly clasped his hands. Gennaro Bianchi was no more.

Victor and his companions knelt by the body of the unfortunate Gennaro Bianchi, and commended his soul to God in the midst of a respectful silence. Then Victor rose and gently closed the eyes of the dead, while he dropped tears of compassion and love upon his pale visage, and quietly kissed those lips, forever closed.

"Sleep now in peace, poor friend," he murmured, "and may I have the happiness of transmitting the last words of repentance that have fallen from your lips to your brother Stefano and your sister Nunziata!"

But a sudden weakness seized him at the moment he uttered those words; a livid paleness overspread his brow, a shadow veiled his eyes, and he fell back motionless upon the ground.

"He's dying, he's dying!" cried Joseph despairingly, while Martin, in his excessive grief, wrung his hands convulsively, and blubbered disconnectedly, "Oh, my God! my God! take me instead—poor mother—and unhappy father—Oh! what a sorrow for you—what a dreadful day!"

"Victor, dear Victor, don't you hear me?" whispered Joseph, pressing his cousin's hand. And gradually that hand seemed to return that gentle, caressing pressure, and grow warm in his. Suddenly Joseph uttered a loud cry—a cry of surprise and joy—for the young man had re opened his eyes. With throbbing heart the two friends knelt close beside him, so as to catch his last words. "My friends," he murmured in a broken voice, "fly, I conjure you—for my last hour has come; it's approaching—I feel it—fly, without any more delay, the dangers that threaten you!"

"But you, my dear Victor?" asked Martin.

"I—I shall die here, far, far away from my country—from my home, but at least near the Holy House of Loreto. Go away my friends, my brothers, for from one moment to another the enemy may come and make you prisoners."

"Abandon you thus, without consolation, without help? Never, never!" they both replied.

"But I shall soon have ceased to live and suffer."

"No, no, Victor. Never, never. And the Piedmontese may come if they like," the faithful Martin hastened to add, "but may the thunder crush me if I budge from here, Victor—from you."

And at these words they could see the eyes of the wounded man fill with tears, so touched was he by these proofs of fidelity and sincere attachment.

But at that moment the sound of approaching steps, the clanking and clashing of horses and arms, was heard in the distance, and the startled Zouaves, listened attentively. It was not long before they saw one of the enemy's divisions, which had dashed off in pursuit of the Pontifical army in the hope of making prisoners.

"O heavens!" cried Joseph, "the Piedmontese are coming—O God! what's to become of us, what shall we do now?"

"My good friends," murmured Victor, "leave me and fly—fly, I beg of you!"

"Go away—without you? We'll never consent to that."

"But God will protect me; He'll help me in your absence."

"Useless to insist, dear Victor; we'll never abandon you."

"But think, my sufferings will soon be over."

"Anyway, I'll not budge from here," replied Peter, resolutely.

"Well, remove me then under the trees in the forest, and perhaps I'll escape them that way."

"Yes," cried Joseph, very bitterly; "we'd lay you there to let you die like a dog, friendless and helpless. No, no; God would never forgive us, and I'd never forgive myself, Victor."

And the noise and the steps seemed nearer, but none of the courageous young men thought of flight, and the wounded man in vain redoubled his prayers and entreaties.

"Fly," he repeated, "don't expose yourself; don't ruin yourself for me, for whom there is no hope of cure or safety in this world!"

The danger indeed was imminent. One moment's hesitation or delay, and their flight would be impossible. Suddenly a ray of hope glistened in Martin's eyes.

"Victor," he cried, "if I took you in my arms and put you on my back, would you be able to endure the fatigues and dangers of flight?"

"Perhaps so. But what's the use of asking, my friends? I'd only embarrass you in your retreat—only delay you. Leave me here, I conjure you, and fearlessly entrust me to the care of God."

"No, no, Victor, we'll never abandon you."

"Let it be so, then, as you wish it," murmured the young men, to whom the hope of seeing his good and devoted friends at last take to flight, seemed to give renewed life and strength.

"Let us go then," said Martin, "altogether, and with the help of God."

And, thanks to Joseph's help, he succeeded in raising him and placing him, as well as he could, on his broad shoulders.

Before going away, Victor cast a glance at the body of the unfortunate Bianchi.

"Farewell, poor Gennaro," he murmured, "we'll meet again before long in another land."

And Martin, a few paces in advance of Joseph, proceeded as quick'y as he could towards the outskirts of the forest, where they were not long in disappearing behind a green curtain of branches.

It was time; for at that very moment the enemy's division halted about a hundred paces behind them on the ground they had just occupied.

"*Capperi!* There's here fighting here," cried the Piedmontese commander, perceiving the two dead bodies.

"Yes; here are two dead, two of ours," replied one of the officers, stooping, so as to see better. "Hold *per Bacco*, this is actually the mysterious stranger who recently joined us. And here is his friend Orazio, the only one of our company in whom he ever deigned to confide. Upon my faith, I'm better pleased it's them than me, since their military career was to end thus."

"They must have been killed by some Pontifical Zouaves whom they were pursuing. Yes; here's one of their rifles. But where the devil can they have concealed themselves, the villainous birds of prey?"

"Probably in these woods; if we were to try there——"

"Oh, no; useless. Forward," the captain replied. "They must have long since got safe away elsewhere, for, you see this fellow's body"—and the commandant pointed to Orazio's body—"is already stiff and cold. As to the other, he must have suffered a long time after receiving that terrible wound."

Meanwhile, our three fugitives hastily withdrew into the thick of the wood, and recommending themselves to God, kept a profound silence. Victor rested his pale drooping head on Martin's robust shoulder, and sometimes, when shaken by an involuntary jolt or a slight shock caused by the unevenness of

the ground, he could not suppress a groan.

"Courage, my poor friend," Martin then murmured sadly, "we'll soon find some retreat, I hope—some shelter where you'll be safe."

"God grant it!" responded Victor, "but, my good Martin, I shudder and disturb you, and weary you to no purpose. Why not leave me here all alone to my fate? Believe me, I fear that very, very little strength, or blood, or life remains in me."

"I think we may rest for an instant," interrupted Joseph, seeing that, as they drew nearer and nearer to the centre of the forest, they had penetrated into a narrow valley, or rather a ravine, shaded by tall trees and carpeted with grass. "I think we'd be very imprudent if we ventured to pass the limits of the wood before nightfall."

They then gently laid him in the shade on a bed of cool grass, while Joseph, seated at his side, raised his head and placed it on his knee. Then, taking out their beads they both invoked their good Mother in heaven to deign to favor their flight and solace their comrade; and Victor, weak as he was, heartily joined in their prayers, and with his affectionate glance seemed to thank them. Besides, Joseph was not slow to lavish his care upon him. He removed the blood-stained linen he had hastily bound round his wound, carefully washed it, covered it with a new bandage, and the poor invalid, half-solaced by these kindly cares, soon fell into a deep sleep, while Joseph was engaged in dressing his own wound, which, as we have said, was not serious.

Towards night they resumed their route, and soon reached the border of the forest. They had just passed it, when, to their great terror, they saw five Piedmontese soldiers, who seemed actually coming up to them. They had only time to again beat a retreat into the interior of the wood to conceal themselves.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE HERMITAGE.

But the Piedmontese soldiers probably had not seen the three fugitives, for they soon moved off in another direction without pursuing them.

Our poor friends humbly thanked heaven that had preserved them from this imminent danger, and halted rather long in a dense thicket, doubtful whether they should pursue or suspend their journey.

Still their position was very critical. Night had come, darkness was going to envelope them in its mysteries and shadows, and they were puzzled to know where to find an asylum, not only for themselves, but for poor Victor, who, in present state of suffering and weakness, would infallibly succumb to the rigors of a night passed in the woods, in the open air.

And yet, calm, confident and resigned, they pursued their way, plunging as far as possible into the depths of the thickets, avoiding beaten paths and open glades, until not far from them they saw a venerable man bent under the weight of years. He slowly advanced along a solitary avenue, stopping from time to time to pick up the herbs that grew in the way. His furrowed brow was bald, his beard thick and gray, his eyes deep set under the arching eyebrows. The simple and peaceful dignity of his whole countenance, the sweet affable expression of his features and glance, betrayed a soul as simple and innocent as that of a child, and at the same time loving and devout as a good father. He wore a robe of gray serge attached to the body by a leather cincture.

The fugitive Zouaves felt, they knew not why, suddenly filled with hope and confidence by his aspect. The old man stopped as they approached. He recognized the Papal uniform at a glance, and hastened to greet the new comers, speaking with the purest French accent:

"Good night, my dear children. You've escaped, then, the massacre. Pray, tell me what can I do for you?"

"We are homeless fugitives, as you see," said Joseph. "Please show us some place of refuge, where we may escape the enemy who is pursuing us."

"Blessed be God, then, who sends you to me," responded the old man. "Indeed, I've very little to offer you, but I offer it to you with all my heart, with sincere joy. Follow me, my children, my hermitage is quite near. It's far from being a palace, indeed, but it will certainly shelter you more agreeably than, perhaps, a palace."

Joseph and Martin expressed themselves profoundly grateful to the venerable unknown.

"Your comrade, I see, is severely wounded," pursued the worthy man. "I have, fortunately, some notions of medicine, and, perhaps, I'll succeed in curing him, with the help of God. I'd send for a surgeon to the nearest village, but that wouldn't be very prudent, I think; for almost all our country doctors are ranged under the flags of our turbulent patriots."

The hermit then led them into the thickest part of the wood, and soon stopped at the entrance of a kind of grotto, which opened naturally in a mass of rocks, but was afterwards opened out, enlarged, and built up by the hand of man. A simple wooden cross was raised upon the summit of the rock; a little kitchen garden lay at its base. The rustic edifice was backed against the side of a rather high hill, whose top spread out in the form of a plateau overlooking the entire country for several leagues round.

"Here, my children," said the old man, "is the hermitage of Fra Paolo; it's a name the country people give me. Welcome under the old hermit's roof."

The little room they entered was poor and almost bare, but very neatly arranged. A wooden table and two chairs, a little *prie dieu* at the head of a straw bed, and a crucifix attached to the wall over an image of the Blessed Virgin, composed all the furniture. But the hermit hastened to open the door of a second room.

"Bring your poor comrade in here, my children. Fortunately I have a softer bed than my own in this retreat, which I sometimes offer to some traveller who is fatigued or has lost his way. As for you, you'll be obliged to content yourself with my poor pallet and one or two bundles of straw, until I find a more comfortable and safer asylum for you to-morrow. But let us first think of your comrade's wound."

And the good old man approached the bed upon which the young Zouave was already laid. Victor strove to mutter his thanks in a weak, trembling voice, but the pious hermit immediately stopped him.

"Above all things, remain perfectly calm and silent, I beg," he said gently. "It will be time enough to-morrow to thank me, although the little I've done for you doesn't deserve such gratitude. Any Christian in my place would have acted like me."

And removing the bandage, he examined the wound, Joseph and Martin, profoundly anxious, silently fixed their eyes on him, and soon saw him shake his head with an uneasy and mournful expression.

"Well!" asked Joseph, in a low voice, "is all hope lost?"

"I wouldn't like to deceive you," replied Fra Paolo, seriously. "If the wound extended only the breadth of a finger in this direction, it would now be all over with your poor comrade. As things are, I've still hopes of saving him; above all, with the help and by the grace of God, which you and I will frequently implore."

The holy man then, having washed the wound, spread a kind of balm on a piece of white linen and placed it over it, rebandaging it with the skill and address of a practised surgeon.

In a few minutes the wounded man, soothed by these efficacious means, fell into a sweet, peaceful slumber.

"Now it is your turn, my friends," resumed the generous hermit. "The supper I've to offer is no doubt very simple and very frugal, but such a day as yesterday ought to sharpen your appetites marvellously. Only, my friend," he continued,

addressing Joseph, "let me first dress your wound; my balm will soothe you. Oh! it's scarcely anything—only a simple scratch. You may thank God you got off so cheaply. And you, my young friend, you've escaped safe and sound from the perils of that terrible combat?"

"Thoroughly safe and sound," responded the brave Martin, "only one or two spent balls struck me here and there."

As a fact, the simple and valiant Campinese had received four balls, which, fortunately, lodged in his clothes; but the extreme disquietude he had felt until then, thinking of his friends, had prevented him from thinking of himself.

The modest repast was soon prepared, and our two friends did honor to it. Then, yielding to the good hermit's earnest entreaties and reiterated orders, they stretched themselves on his bed, and were not slow to forget, in the midst of a profound sleep, the perils, agonies and fatigues of the day.

With the first glimpse of morning, Joseph and Martin rose and were greeted by the hermit with a cordial "good-day," and a crowd of questions concerning their families, their country, and the various incidents that had marked that fatal day passed on the battle-field.

The young Zouaves had not done describing the battle of Castelfidardo, when all at once they saw the door open and a young girl made her appearance at the threshold. At the sight of the two strangers she quickly drew back, exclaiming, "*Accidente!*"—a word that involuntarily escapes from the lips of every Italian in moments of surprise, admiration or terror.

"Come in, Marietta," said the hermit at once, smiling, to the young girl. "Don't be afraid; these brave men that you see here have only come to defend the cause of the Holy Father."

At these words, Marietta, her fears dispelled, resolutely crossed the threshold of the cabin and smilingly advanced, saluting the foreign Zouaves with unaffected cordiality.

"Good day, Fra Paolo," she said. "My mother sent me to ask how is your health."

"Very well, my child," replied the worthy man. "And pray tell me, how are they at home?"

"Oh! none of us are ill," replied the young girl, "only we were terribly frightened yesterday all the time that dreadful battle lasted. And tell me, were these *signori* also engaged in it?"

"Alas! yes, Marietta, and I was fortunately able to offer them shelter after the battle. But you see my poor hermitage is too narrow for such a number of guests and good friends. For, unfortunately, I have to care for a wounded man, one of their brave companions in arms. If there's a family in the neighborhood upon whom I could rely to perform this act of charity along with me, it is certainly yours, my dear girl, isn't it?"

"Oh! Fra Paolo, what a good and happy thought! How happy my dear parents will be to be able to aid the defenders of the Holy Father?"

"Is your brother, Lorenzo, at home?"

"Not at this moment, for he had to go with a message to Loreto. But he'll be back shortly before noon."

"Very well; in that case we will not fail to hear the news. You'll tell him, Marietta, to come to me this evening, so that before nightfall he may be able to guide these young men, and introduce them, without danger, into your peaceful dwelling, where, I hope, they'll receive a cordial and fraternal hospitality, with which they'll have every reason to be satisfied."

But Marietta made no reply; she seemed thoughtful, and, with her eyes fixed on the ground, kept a profound silence.

"What are you thinking of, my child? You seem to be dreaming, little one?"

"I was thinking of the comrade of these *signori*—that wounded Zouave,—tell me, Fra Paolo, could I see him?"

"Certainly, my daughter," replied the good hermit. And he at once introduced her into the room where Victor was repos-

ing. Joseph and Martin following.

The young man was still buried in a sweet, peaceful slumber, and light colors were beginning to tinge his cheeks, brow, and lips. The young girl knelt near the bed, fixing a look of admiration, mingled with pity, on his noble countenance.

"O the poor young man!" she murmured, with a deep sigh. And then turning towards the softened hermit: "Oh! you'll cure him, my good Father, won't you?"

"I hope so, Marietta. But you'll promise me, on your part, my child, the help of your prayers?"

"Undoubtedly, Fra Paolo. I'll perform a novena for him to our Lady of Pity, and I'll offer up my Communion on Sunday for his cure. O the poor young man, what a pity he's wounded!"

At that moment the invalid opened his eyes, and cast a look of astonishment about him. But he perceived his two friends, and recognized the hermit.

"O thanks, thanks, holy man!" he cried, in accents of profound gratitude. "It is you who snatched me from the bloody hands of death."

"Don't speak of it, my child," interrupted the hermit. "Tell me, rather, how you find yourself after your rest last night?"

"Oh!" murmured Victor, deeply moved, "I already feel my wounds considerably assuaged with the help of God and thanks to your excellent balm."

"That's just what I expected. It's not the first time, thank God, my balm did miracles. Now try to sleep, my dear son," said Fra Paolo, preparing to leave the room. "We'll soon return to see if you want anything."

"O povero Giovanni," sighed Marietta.

The same evening Lorenzo presented himself at the hermitage. He was a robust, agile young man, with open air, brown hair, and brilliant black eyes. His countenance was simple and modest, but resolute, and he held his head firm and erect, as if he did not fear to look his friends and enemies in the face. He approached the hermit with every mark of sincere *empressment* and profound respect; then cordially shook hands with the two Zouaves.

"Bravi voi!" he cried, "you're valiant soldiers, you and your comrades. Ah! we shall be very happy and very proud to see you in our midst. But tell me, Fra Paolo, where's that poor wounded fellow? Marietta has told us so much about him that I'm longing to shake hands with him as with a brother."

"Follow me," said the old man, going towards the door. "Victor, my child, here's a new friend who's come to visit you."

But, before even the hermit had done speaking, Lorenzo, in his enthusiasm, had rushed towards the bed and embraced Victor with respectful compassion and real affection.

"O caro ferito!—It's a holy martyr of the Lord, isn't it, Fra Paolo?"

"Yes, my child; but a martyr we shall cure, I hope."

Indeed, the condition of the invalid was already sensibly improved, thanks to the good attendance of the man of God, who had formerly studied medicine. So the young man, rising with difficulty, hastened to thank his visitor and his host for the affectionate sympathy and interest they manifested towards him.

"But who," cried the generous Lorenzo—"who could be so insensible and senseless as not to be moved at the sight of the prodigious enthusiasm the Pontifical troops have displayed, and the barbarous treatment the victorious enemies have made them endure?"

"Alas, you say right, Lorenzo," replied the good hermit. "But since you come from Loreto, tell us what you've seen and heard there. And first of all, tell us was Lamoricière able to reach Ancona?"

"Certainly, my good Father. He slipped through their fingers just like a needle, and entered the fortress yesterday evening."

"How could he do that?" interrupted Joseph. "Have

our troops then succeeded in cutting their way over the enemies' bodies?"

"Alas, no, signor. The General-in-Chief, followed by some faithful companions, alone was able to pass through Umana, where the road was open. As to the body of the army, it retired to Loreto."

"Were our comrades pursued by the Piedmontese?"

"No, signor. The Sardinian soldiers, you may be sure, had no wish to become better acquainted with the Zouaves bayonets. They were content to post videttes on the tops of our mountains to watch their movements. Only this morning your companions have begun to treat with the Piedmontese relative to the capitulation of the place, which was to be carried out on this sole condition: that the Pontifical soldiers should retire with arms and baggage."

Joy sparkled in Joseph's eyes at this consoling news, which made him hopeful.

"But it's impossible for me to describe to you what I have seen at Loreto," continued Lorenzo. "I had entered the Church of the Santa Casa. Oh! what a heart-rending spectacle met my gaze! The ground was strewn with mattresses, carpets, coarse linen cloths, and bundles of straw, which served as beds for an immense number of wounded soldiers. Those Christian soldiers rested their icy-cold foreheads and bleeding hands against the marble walls or on the altar steps. They were God's holy victims immolated in his defence. Scattered through their midst the noble Sisters of St. Vincent eagerly lent their succor, their attendance their prayers; and all the time the Holy Sacrifice was offered for them at the altar. The sacrifice of those valiant soldiers was united to that of the Lamb of God, the unspotted Victim, and arose like incense, to the porch of heaven—Oh! as long as I live I'll never forget that scene of glory and pain, that pious, that heroic and heart-rending spectacle."

The good hermit and his guests were deeply moved at this account of Lorenzo, who, overcome himself by the recollection of it, was obliged to break off for an instant.

"The most heroic calmness, the most perfect resignation," he continued, "reigned in that sanctuary of suffering and faith. Sometimes, in the midst of the silence, was heard some half-stifled moan or involuntary groan wrung by pain from the unfortunate wounded, dressed or amputated by the surgeon. All these poor wounded were equally calm, equally serious, thoughtfully awaiting the command of their God, after having obeyed the command of their general."

"But tell me," interrupted Joseph, "what's become of the dead? They have received the last rites, the honours Catholic charity reserves for them everywhere."

"Alas! undeceive yourself," cried Lorenzo. "Indeed, all my blood boils in my veins, when I think of it. Didn't General Cialdini boast of having a great number of dead on his hands after the battle? Hasn't he refused the Pontifical soldiers the sad privilege of burying their dead comrades? Hasn't he thrown all their bodies, pell-mell, into one common grave, thus depriving fathers and mothers who tearfully toiled up the paths of the hill the consolation of weeping over their children's tomb's? Besides, the Piedmontese commandants have refused the chaplains of the Pontifical army authorization to exercise their holy ministry over the wounded and dying. 'If the rabble want priests, our chaplains are there,' he replied. 'But, General, the French, Belgians, Irish and Germans don't all understand Italian; they want priests of their own countries who'll understand them.' 'Come, come,' concluded the General, 'these ragamuffins who fight for priests hardly deserve one should take such trouble with them—Soldiers take care of them—they're your prisoners of war.'"

"O heaven, what barbarity!" murmured the hermit, with upraised hands. "And those are the men who pretended to deliver Italy from the tyranny of the priests?"

"And yet, despite such contempt, such sufferings," continued the young man, "the Pontifical soldiers preserved to the last their heroic constancy, and even their gaiety. Accompanied by my friend Antonio, I entered the church at Castel-

fidardo, where the wounded, without beds or bandage, and almost without succor, were stretched bleeding on the stone flags. There were there—I counted them carefully—forty-nine Zouaves, and, among others, the captain of the second company.

"Oh! that poor Guitton, a Belgian! Tell me, Lorenzo, was he seriously wounded?"

"Alas, yes, the poor man! There were not less than three balls in his body, and the surgeon gave him up. There were several other Belgians, too, whose names I don't remember, except Laigniel, a young man of eighteen. He told me he received a ball in the arm, and that it was then he dropped his weapon."

"Courageous boy!" murmured Victor, "he had abandoned his studies and his class-room to fly to the defence of the Holy Father."

"But would you believe it, Fra Paolo," continued the narrator, "all those brave young men had still the courage to jest and laugh? A Zouave, whose body a bullet had pierced, had engaged in a lively discussion with a Piedmontese. I couldn't understand what they said, but it must have been something very comical, for the Zouaves laughed heartily."

"It must have been Tresvaux de Fraval," interrupted Joseph; "he's the best fellow I know—always gay, always content, and, above all, always talking. I never met him a single time that he didn't greet me with some pleasantry."

"Another of those young men," continued Lorenzo, "was called, I think, Paolo or Poli."

"It's Poli, no doubt, the noble Oscar Poli," replied Victor.

"Precisely; he had been wounded in the chest. While he was crawling painfully along by the church, he suddenly heard himself called. That voice, coming from an obscure corner, seemed to issue from a colorless and formless heap of blood-stained bandages. 'What, my poor Poli, don't you recognize me?' murmured that plaintive voice. 'No, indeed, my friend.' 'I'm your comrade, de Lacarte.' 'What! it's you!' 'Yes, myself.' 'Aren't you dead, then?' 'No, not that I know.' The poor young soldier who lay in that corner had been hit by a bullet that pierced both his cheeks. He was a ghastly sight at that moment. Antonio and I were moved to tears. What most surprised us was to see those young men, despite their captivity, misery and suffering, with still courage and animation enough to laugh and jest, simply and joyously, as if they were in the midst of some feast."

"But aren't they right, my friend?" interrupted Victor, smiling. "Their hearts are pure, their consciences tranquil, and death is for them only a blessed invitation to the never ending feast, the glorious triumphs of heaven."

Lorenzo continued, for some time longer, to relate to his auditors everything interesting he had seen at Castelfidardo and Loreto. Then, when night came, he brought Martin and Joseph to his father's home, where they were received with the greatest heartiness, and the sincerest affection.

Luigi, Lorenzo's and Marietta's father, was a good, honest peasant, apparently about fifty. Bettina, his wife, a brisk, prepossessing little woman, was as good, as affable, and as sincerely obliging as her husband himself.

The two Zouaves had hardly entered this hospitable roof, when they were received as if they really belonged to the family. They were glad to learn that the Piedmontese, after having long explored the environs, had gone away in the direction of Ancona. Marietta's brother, however, was not in a position to acquaint them with the indignities to which the Piedmontese then subjected their unfortunate prisoners in the hospitals of Oscina, Alessandria, Genoa, and many other places, too.

Here is what one of those valiant Belgians—Verecken, Hevraert, Lacraix, and Callebaut, who formed part of the five hundred and fifty picked men with whom Colonel O'Reilly, for twenty-four hours, defended the citadel of Spoleto against an army of fifteen thousand, and who were afterwards led prisoners to Genoa, where they arrived on October 4th—wrote:

"After having been miserably transferred from one place to another, without ever having had a fixed residence, here we are now at Genoa, completely ignorant of the destiny that is being prepared for us, shut up in infected casemates, covered with rags, devoured by vermin, without linen, without money, and—what do I say?—without a hope of ever seeing our fair land."

Alas! was not that the fate of a crowd of other heroes who had to undergo, on the one side, the dangers of fatigue, and, on the other the horrors of captivity?

CHAPTER XV.

PRISONERS AND FUGITIVES.

Victor and his two comrades, much more fortunate than their companions languishing in merciless and shameful captivity, and suffering every ill-treatment from their barbarous oppressors, were peacefully sheltered under the good hermit's roof, or at the hospitable hearth of honest Luigi.

Now, one evening, a few days after the battle of Castelfidardo, Joseph and Martin went to the hermitage to see their wounded companion. Suddenly there were some knocks outside. The hermit immediately rose.

"Who's there?" he asked.

"We're poor strangers. we've lost our way. Couldn't we rest an instant under your roof to ask you for some directions about our way?"

Fra Paolo opened the door.

"Zouaves! Zouaves!" he cried, joyfully, at the sight of three young soldiers standing on the threshold—three poor fugitives of the Pontifical army. "Welcome!" he continued extending his hand, "welcome!"

And they followed him into his modest dwelling.

"Here are comrades—friends, my son," he said, addressing Victor.

Our young Belgians had hardly glanced at the first of the three fugitives, when they all exclaimed joyfully: "It is you, Van Gameren! welcome!"

And Joseph and Martin rushed forward to shake hands with their companion in arms. But the valiant Antwerpian tore himself from their arms to cast himself at the wounded comrade's pillow.

"Victor, my dear comrade, I see you're wounded, you're suffering? Oh! how I thought of you, how I trembled for you when I lost sight of you in the retreat!"

"I believe all hope is not lost, my good Leo," replied the invalid. "I've been wounded in the side, but I already feel better, and to-day, for the first time, I have been able to leave my bed."

Meanwhile, Fra Paolo hastened to place a seat for the young Zouaves.

"And now," said the old man, "tell us the news while I prepare a modest supper for you."

"Tell me, first of all, Leo," said Victor, "what occurred to yourself. Weren't you wounded, as I feared?"

"No, thank God, my good friend. I didn't receive even the slightest scratch. Only since that time my right ear's deaf. It is the fault of a cursed ball that carried away a very little bit of the ear, killing a man alongside me. But the fight—the massacre! Ah! what a dreadful sight! I've seen almost all my companions fall, one after the other. Our battalion was almost entirely destroyed. And the Pope—the unhappy Pontiff has lost all his possessions, for everywhere victory favors the Piedmontese."

"True," replied Joseph; "but Ancona still holds out, for it is ably defended by our own heroic commander. Lorenzo told us to-day that up to this time the Piedmontese weren't able to make a breach as large as a foot in the wall on the inland side."

"But that noble, that heroic resistance is now, alas! aimless and hopeless—at least, unless prompt succor guarantees and

protects the Holy Father's last possessions."

"My friend, it would be impossible for me to describe to you," resumed the brave Leo, "all that we had to suffer in that dangerous flight. We were separated from the body of the army while it was retreating on Loreto; almost despairing of escaping the enemy, we fled to the mountains, where we had to conceal ourselves for several days in the caves and caverns of the rocks, all that time living only on wild roots and herbs, and old broken biscuits we had brought away with us. We even ventured from time to time to quit our retreat at night, and to advance into the interior of the country. But, after having wandered about for several days, we saw that, in place of advancing in the direction of Rome, unfortunately, we hadn't quitted the neighborhood of Loreto. We dared not stop to get a guide for fear of meeting traitors, who'd have given us up to the enemy. At the simple sight of the cross surmounting the hermitage, we felt emboldened to knock and implore succor from the generosity of its inhabitants."

"Truly it was the hand of God brought you here. Our good hermit who received us and cared for us with a fatherly fondness, will give you every information you may desire."

"He'll do us a great service, for all we want is to get to Rome as quick as possible."

At that moment Fra Paolo entered, inviting his guests to a modest repast. At first, he tried everything to get them to remain at least one night more; then he gave them every explanation he could to enable them quietly to pursue their way and reach Rome without danger.

"But why do you want to go away so soon?" he repeated. "Wait at least until the morning; you'll rest to-night."

"No, no, my good father; Rome, Rome, nothing but Rome," responded the three Zouaves.

Joseph and Martin vainly joined their entreaties to those of the hermit. Van Gameren and his companions, as soon as they had sufficiently rested, took leave of Victor and all their friends at the hermitage.

"We'll rejoin you at Rome as soon as we can," cried Victor after them.

"Well, *au revoir*, then,"

"*Au revoir*, my friends, Success to you and a safe journey."

"Poor fellows!" sighed Victor, however, as soon as they were out of hearing; "I'm very, very much afraid they'll soon fall into the hands of the enemy."

He was deceived, however. Van Gameren and his two companions, although exposed to the cruellest fatigues, and surrounded with perils, reached their journey's end safe. "I wish you had seen me," wrote Van Gameren to his brother. "I had all the look of a mendicant, a beggar. My clothes were falling off me; my handsome Zouave's uniform, which I had put on quite new scarcely a month ago, was literally in pieces. Fortunately, they've given me another."

Victor's health appeared to improve day by day. Thanks to the hermit's doctoring, his wound was already almost cicatrized, and he would have been able to proceed towards Rome along with his companions if he had not been sensibly weakened by the copious hemorrhage.

But the hermit would not listen to their going.

"Wait," he said to them, "wait, my children until your friend's strength is completely restored and the surrounding country quieter. You mustn't forget the Piedmontese are still scouring the country."

They said the same thing at Luigi's. The young Zouaves then were constrained to yield to these entreaties, and defer their departure. They were greatly distressed, thinking how uneasy their Belgian friends would be on their account. And yet they could not make up their minds to write a few words with a view of reassuring them; for they were afraid, by so doing they would reveal the place of their retreat to their enemies. Besides, if they could have got rid of this anxiety, they would have led a quiet, happy life with their good friends, for all vied with each other in testifying their respect, interest, and affection for them. Lorenzo and Marietta particularly could

not exist without their company.

The young man had the greatest admiration and deepest sympathy for the brave Martin. The two friends were inseparable, and although it was not very easy for them to understand one another, they conversed with an animation and a vivacity it was a pleasure to witness. Lorenzo particularly admired the prodigious strength and splendid stature of the hardy volunteer.

"What a splendid soldier!" he cried. "Oh, Martin, I'd like to see you hug Garibaldi. Without any flattery, I think you'd settle his business!"

Marietta liked to talk to Joseph, who spoke to her lovingly of his dear native land, of his beloved mother and his gentle sister.

"My sister's name is Mary, like yours," he said, "and she is nearly your age."

"Oh! how I should like to know her."

"That would be a little difficult," replied Joseph, smiling "but when I shall have returned to Belgium, I'll send you her portrait. I'll tell her what affection and devotion Marietta and her respectable family have shown towards the poor volunteers, and she'll pray for you, I assure you, for she is as pious and good as your mother's children."

Marietta blushed at this unexpected praise, and to give a turn to the conversation, she asked, in a timid voice:

"Is Belgium a fine country?"

And then Joseph described to her the beautiful landscapes and the charming views of the Campine, recounting to her their memories, traditions, manners and customs. Often, when the evening came round, they sat together before the door of the *cascina*, to take the air, and Marietta then, accompanying herself on the harp, sang one of those touching *canzonette* one hears so often sung by the fresh voices of the villagers under the beautiful Italian sky. Then it was Joseph's turn, and the young man intoned the war song of the Belgian volunteers, while Lorenzo, Marietta and Martin chorused the refrain.

Then, at nightfall, Joseph and Martin, in company with Lorenzo, went to visit their friend at the hermitage. Victor, in turn, as soon as he was able to walk, was accustomed to follow them from time to time to the *cascina*, where he passed a whole day with them.

The good hermit found it difficult to accustom himself to Victor's absence. He had devoted an unbounded affection, a real father's love, to the young invalid. The noble lad was not slow in opening his heart to him, speaking of his love for his parents, his father's errors, and of the grief this deplorable blindness caused him.

"Hope, my dear son, your father will be converted," the hermit responded.

"Oh! may your words come true, Father!" murmured the young man, overcome. "I would willingly give my life to obtain that supreme favor. But, alas! will God deign to accept, to bless my sacrifice?"

"Have confidence, my child; who knows but the Lord has already heard you? In any case, I assure you, you may sooner or later safely count on your father's conversion."

When they talked this way, Victor usually ascended the hill at the base of which the hermitage was built, and kneeling on the summit, from which he could perceive the holy House of Loreto, he prayed to the Mother of Grace and Goodness.

At last, when the day of their departure came, in the beginning of November, all the inhabitants of the *cascina* were plunged in grief.

Fra Paolo, accompanied by Victor, had quitted the hermitage on the preceding evening, and both passed the night under the good peasant's roof. The young men provided themselves with arms, as they might have to measure swords with some of the enemy's soldiers on their way. As to Lorenzo, he had firmly resolved to be their guide; at least as far as the frontier of the Papal States.

"No, no," he cried, smiling; "I don't want you to fall into the hands of the Piedmontese. You've caused us too much anxiety on that account. And it would be for the sake of these

seconded we'd have given ourselves so much trouble! Make yourself easy; I know all the country round about us as well as my right hand, the roads and the woods, the gorges and the hills; and, believe me, we'll traverse them without risks and without difficulties."

They could not refuse him this last favor. Next day, at dawn, the four companions, dressed as peasants, were ready to start; but the separation, as one may well think, was very painful. One would have thought beloved children were quitting the paternal roof without a hope of returning.

Bettina and Marietta wept bitterly. Luigi was in a very bad humor, for that was his way of showing his grief. Fra Paolo, leaning on a stout oak stick, glanced sadly at Victor.

"My child, my dear child," said he, in a low voice, "pray for the old hermit, who'll always pray for you."

The young travellers, at the moment of crossing the threshold, knelt at the venerable old man's feet.

"Give us your blessing, Father," they said.

Fra Paolo raised his eyes and hands to heaven, and made the sign of the cross over their bowed heads. Then they exchanged a last greeting, a last clasp of the hand.

"Farewell, farewell! *Addio*, dear children!"

And the young men, crossing the threshold, went away in the direction of Rome.

CHAPTER XVI.

END OF A FREETHINKER.

The henceforth illustrious names of Castelfidardo and the Crocetti had resounded throughout Europe. The glory of the courageous martyrs of light and justice, as well as the shameful triumph of the conquerors, were published everywhere. Every one heartily admired the heroic courage of the volunteers and the prudence of their brave generals, and recognized the crushing numerical superiority of the enemies as well as the ferocious severity and implacable rancor of the chiefs who had led them to battle.

And yet, with how many tears and sighs of regret was that glory accompanied! There parents were weeping for a son of whom the murderous bullet had deprived them; elsewhere sisters were going into mourning for a brother of whose fate they were ignorant—or perhaps it was a husband or betrothed who had fallen on the blood-stained battle-field, or dear friends separated forever.

But who could paint the constant and painful anxiety of relatives and friends without tidings of their dear ones? What had become of those for whom so many tears were being shed? Were they dead, or severely wounded? Had they escaped—were they languishing in prison? Alas! who could tell?

Every time the papers published a new list of the wounded, they were eagerly snatched up, each expecting to see his fears happily dispelled or fatally confirmed. And for many those cruel tortures of doubt and uncertainty were prolonged; they could not find the names of their children, brothers, friends in the list. All hope was then lost; they were dead and buried in the inglorious trench dug for them by the cruel hands of Cialdini's soldiers. How else account for their silence?

It was this doubt and uncertainty that for several weeks wrung the hearts of our Schrambeck friends. Since the papers had conveyed to them the deplorable news of the Castelfidardo massacre, not even doubtful news of their three volunteers had reached them. Days passed in indescribable anguish awaiting the moment when the last glimmer of hope would be extinguished—for who knows whether they should ever hear of the fate of their children?

The three mothers and the sisters, however, bore this great grief calmly; faith compensated for joy and hope; but the unhappy father, the proud *philosophe*, who had nothing to rest on but his human courage and his cold, austere reason,

could not bear it, and was gradually falling into a profound melancholy. While his wife, his niece, and his sister-in-law were drawing hope and consolation at the foot of the tabernacle or before the humble altar of the Mother of God, he was roaming about the country a prey to brooding sorrow, or passing long hours shut up in his chamber, silent, motionless, and with his head buried in his hands. Although the season was already advanced, he had not yet been able to make up his mind to leave his country house. In the first place, he knew his wife found some consolation in her sister's company. As for himself, he had not the courage to tear himself away from his dear Mary, who by her simple affection and loving solicitude, alone could sometimes dissipate his sombre melancholy.

"Dear uncle, why are you always so sad?" said she affectionately, trying to conquer her own grief in order to soothe his.

"Alas! my poor child, how could I be merry? We'll never, never more see our poor unfortunate exiles."

"Still, uncle, all hope is not lost. You know every day young Zouaves whom one thought dead are writing to their relatives or returning their families."

"I know it, my good Mary, and that's exactly why I'm despondent. All those who've come back were at first prisoners of war, and none of them have come across our poor friends. They haven't been seen either at Genoa, Alessandria or any other prison. Tell me, Mary, tell me what hope remains to us now? They have certainly been killed in action, abandoned on the field of battle."

And the unhappy father stopped abruptly, and vainly strove to restrain the tears that rushed to his eyes, while, strange to say, Mary felt a mysterious peace, a supernatural strength; understanding that God had made her the only support and consolation of this unhappy father, whose heart was closed to every hope from heaven, and who was consequently every instant on the point of succumbing under the burden of grief.

"Still, nobody has seen them fall upon the battle-field, dear uncle," she resumed. "Even those of their companions who fought by their side up to the close of the action say they didn't lose sight of them until the moment the retreat commenced. Favored by the disorder that prevailed in the ranks, couldn't they have escaped and found some secret hiding-place?"

"No, no, my poor Mary. How could they get safely away in a country invaded by a victorious army? Besides, wouldn't they have written since then to relieve us of any uncertainty as to their fate?"

"Who knows? Perhaps they are concealed at Loreto itself or in the neighborhood, and won't write for fear of making known their place of retreat to the Piedmontese commanders!"

"Alas! poor child," pursued the unhappy father still more sadly, "it is the voice of your love that, despite everything, cradles you in these consoling illusions. You'd like to make me share them to calm and sustain me by the shadow of a hope."

"No, no, my very dear uncle, I'm not deluding myself; but a firm and pious confidence tells me to believe and to hope, so long as hope is possible and confidence allowable. I am obeying the voice of faith, pure and potent faith, which tells me of a mysterious Father in heaven who watches over all His children, and protects them even in the midst of the greatest dangers, the most terrible trials. It is this divine confidence and faith I wish to communicate to you, my good uncle; not to cherish vain illusions in your heart, but to engender a sweet, strong hopefulness in your soul."

"My good and dear Mary, I heartily admire your resignation and courage, but I can't share them; for me it is too late! If the God whom you adore really exists, and controls and directs the actions of men, He can only be to me a severe Judge, a pitiless Executioner, and not a kind and loving Father; for I have outraged and insulted Him; I have denied His existence, despised His power, and defied His wrath."

"Oh! my dear uncle, don't speak so. Banish those melancholy thoughts; know better that God loves you. He is, with-

out contradiction, infinitely holy and infinitely powerful, and, consequently, detests and punishes every fault, every injustice; but, at the same time, His goodness is inexhaustible and His mercy infinite; He is never deaf to the penitent's voice, never refuses His pardon to the humble soul. Oh! if you would but be moved to hope and believe at last, to yield to His powerful voice who invites and calls you!"

At these touching words, the old man bent his head and made no answer, but remained lost in thought. It had certainly cost him too much to confess his blindness, to recognize he was wrong; and yet that pardon which his niece's words seemed to announce—that promise of peace from a Divine voice—unknown, alas! to the unhappy man for many a sad year—and that hope in the goodness of the Almighty—all those graces and benedictions fell like the dew of heaven on his saddened soul and showed him clearly what treasures he had lost in voluntarily separating himself from the faith of the Eternal God. And, once more, the spirit of darkness and the spirit of light struggled secretly in his soul.

Besides, as often as Victor's father conversed with Mary, the sombre veil that darkened his features, his countenance and his glance, seemed withdrawn, and a ray of hope appeared to brighten his pale face. But he soon relapsed into his usual melancholy, and wandered sad and lonely through the forest to the east of Schrambeck, or stopped, dreamy and motionless, before the hill where the demolished castle raised its ruined walls.

Walking one day near the Chapel of Consolation he met Teresa there praying. Handing her an alms, and without looking at her, he murmured gently:

"Pray for our children, my good woman, and—don't forget me."

And he walked rapidly away.

The beggar-woman raised her head and looked after the old man in profound astonishment.

"Ah, Monsieur Morren, Monsieur Morren, your day will come," she said, "make your mind easy; others beside me are praying for the poor wanderer."

It could not be otherwise. Madame Van Dael, to whom Mary related the conversation her uncle had with her in the garden, joined her fervent prayers to those of her daughter and Victor's mother. Madame Morren, however, despite the strength of soul she constantly displayed, was beginning to succumb under the burden of her griefs and heart-rending disquietudes. One morning in November, when, after a night passed in tears and sleeplessness, she came down to breakfast, she looked so completely downcast that her husband at once exclaimed:

"In the name of heaven, my dear Rose, what's the matter with you? You really frighten me—you are so pale, so changed!"

The poor woman, touched by his solicitude, tried to smile, but at that instant her strength failed her, and she could only murmur, through her tears, which fell abundantly:

"Oh, my Victor, my poor child, what can have become of him?"

The old man made no reply, but bent his head, and both were silent for some minutes. At last, he rose, and seemed to have taken a sudden resolution.

"I'm going to town," he said, decisively. "It appears a volunteer has just arrived; perhaps he can give me some information—some news. Meanwhile, keep up your courage. As long as we're not certain of our boy's death we may, we ought to hope. Who knows but I shall bring you some consoling news?"

Thus he strove to dissemble his own grief to arouse his wife's courage if possible. A few moments later he left for town, and had hardly alighted from the train when he began the search. But his fleeting hopes were soon disappointed. Vainly he multiplied his walks and his visits; he collected, indeed, a good deal of information about the heroism of the Zouaves, the number of the dead and wounded, and the sufferings of the prisoners, but not a word to reveal the fate

of Victor and his two companions. The young volunteer who had come home could tell him nothing more, unless that he had lost sight of his comrade Victor in the thick of the fight, and that probably he had perished along with his companions. None of the prisoners had seen him or heard of him since the defeat.

All this was certainly calculated to afflict a father's heart. So, weak and hopeless, the unhappy man wandered through the streets. At last, by chance, he found himself before his friend Ernest Van Dormael's door. He knocked mechanically; he seemed to have lost all his presence of mind. A servant opened it.

"Monsieur Morren—it's you? But, alas! at what a moment!" she cried, astounded.

"How? What's the matter with him?" replied the old man, surprised at such a reception.

"Ah! don't you know? Monsieur Ernest is dying. This very morning he was as well as you or I. Oh! if you saw him! It's really a dreadful thing!"

"Can I see him, then?"

"Certainly, sir. All his friends are with him—will you wait a moment? I'll go and announce your visit."

And she introduced him into the parlor, went up stairs to the first floor, and in a few moments returned, requesting him to follow her.

The sick man, stretched on his bed, was at that moment suffering from excruciating cramps; his face was convulsed, and becoming gradually blue; his eyes were flashing, his distorted features betrayed the most dreadful anguish, and the veins on his forehead were swollen horribly, and, as it were, twisted.

Around the unhappy man's bed several persons were assembled: first, his sister; then his eldest brother, owner of the house; the family physician, all dressed in black; and, lastly, a friend of the dying man—a so-called friend, come there with the intention of carefully stifling all the aspirations, pious desires, and remorse that might awaken in that soul. All these men assembled around his bed formed part of the famous society of the Solidaires. They had come to carefully watch that departing soul up to the last moment.

M. Morren had hardly crossed the threshold, when the dying man already stretched out his hands towards him, fixing upon him a look almost of despair.

"Oh! Morren, my friend," he cried, "a priest! Don't let me die thus, without consolation, without succor!"

"But, Ernest, you'll not die. It's only a momentary indisposition, a passing illness. Your friend, the doctor, can't fail to cure you."

"No, no, don't believe him; it's death; I feel it already; already its chill freezes me; already its hand is drawing me away. A priest, a priest, I conjure you. They won't send for a priest, and still I can't die like a wretch, like a dog."

"Sir," said the old man, then, in a graver tone, addressing Ernest's brother. "You see as well as I do what your brother wishes in this; still I think you are in all justice obliged to do what he wants. You'll be guilty of real barbarity in refusing to comply with his last wishes."

"Come, come," said Van Dormael in a tone of indifference. "Can we bother ourselves with such childishness? Ernest himself will blush at such puerile solicitations when he has recovered his health. Hasn't he often recommended us never to yield to such entreaties, were he to repeat them a hundred times under the sway of a complete aberration—a sudden weakness of mind?"

"But at this moment he formally expresses his will."

"And my will in the case is as formal. He'll thank me one day for not having acceded to his request."

"A priest! ah! for pity's sake a priest!" interposed the wretch, writhing in his bed. The physician drew near and wanted to administer a soothing draught. But all his efforts were useless. The dying man in the midst of his agony, continued writhing and repeating despairingly: "For pity's sake a priest, a priest!"

Mr. Morren, contemplated with irrepressible horror this

dreadful scene, turned towards Ernest's sister, who was weeping in a corner.

"Mademoiselle," said he, "couldn't you at least try to fulfil your brother's last wish?"

"Alas! we don't know any priest," sighed the unhappy young girl.

"But the first passer-by could point out one."

"Would he consent to follow me to a freethinker, as we are called?"

"Undoubtedly, my good child. Go quickly, make haste, if you would spare yourself everlasting anguish."

"A priest! a priest!" repeated the dying man at that instant in a voice so loud and terrible that the young girl fled from the room and rushed out to satisfy his last wish.

"Know that the priest shall not enter here," cried the eldest brother rushing after her.

Meanwhile, Victor's father drew near the bed.

"What are you suffering from, my poor Ernest?" he asked compassionately.

"Alas, my friend, I don't know. This morning I was in perfect health. All at once the hand of death has seized me, and my whole body seems to have become his prey. Oh! Morren, Morren, I feel it is a chastisement, a vengeance from heaven. A few days ago I mounted guard just the same at the bedside of one of my friends. He, too, asked for a priest, and I pitilessly, cruelly refused him. I brutally shut the door in the face of the messenger of the Lord; in my malignant obstinacy and guilty indifference, I let my friend die like an abandoned wretch, like a pagan, an animal.—Wretch that I am," he cried, wringing his hands and gnashing his teeth, in his excessive despair: "the priest will not come, and I'll die in the same way. These fellows"—and he pointed out the three friends ranged around his bed—"these fellows have come to guard me. I have richly deserved it!"

Ernest's brothers and his two friends quitted the bedside to place themselves before the door.

"To die, to die so young," he repeated, "to die like a vile animal when I felt still full of strength and life! Oh, woe, woe to me! And tell me, what will happen to me after my death? What is there beyond the tomb, Morren, do you know? What have I to expect?"

The *philosophe*, dejected and confounded, remained mute with horror. The miserable Ernest, in his mad transports, writhed in his bed; all his members were dreadfully convulsed.

"No, no, the priests will not come," he cried at last. "The priests! I have persecuted, calumniated, insulted and disdained them at my pleasure. Yes, I have done it; and they know it. They know well the freethinker, their adversary, their enemy, and they'll refuse me their succor. And, even if they should accord them, what use would they be to me? It is too late; I feel it; no more hope or pardon for me! I have denied everything, blasphemed everything, sullied everything with my disdain, my insults."

And the wretch, speaking thus, wrung his hands and tore his hair in despair.

The door suddenly opened, and Mlle. Van Dormael reappeared, accompanied by a priest.

"This way, sir," said she, introducing him into the room.

The ecclesiastic who accompanied her was a fine, robust old man, calm and dignified. But before he could even cross the threshold, the three associates, pale and menacing, stood before him, barring the way.

"Get out of this!" cried Ernest's brother, in an angry voice; "you'll not cross the threshold of this room while I'm here."

At first the servant of God seemed surprised at the exclamation; but he soon resumed his modest confidence and self-possession.

"Gentlemen," he replied, "I'm told there is a dying man here wants to see me."

"You're wrong; you're not wanted."

"But this poor invalid seems to suffer so much," interposed the old man, pointing to the unfortunate Ernest.

"Oh! yes, I'm suffering a great deal. Come! a priest, a priest!"

"Get out of this house this instant, hypocrite!" cried Van Dormael, furiously; "withdraw this instant; or I—"

"But you can't deny that I've been called in—"

"No one has called you in. It is I alone who decide and command here—"

"Consequently your victim is not entitled to my prayers, to my assistance, nor to the exercise of his liberty—that supreme liberty of which you are resolved to deprive him with so much hatred and fury?"

"Don't argue with me—go!" retorted the wretch furiously. "And go without delay, or else my people, whom I am going to call, will kick you out of doors."

At these words the venerable priest, undismayed by these unworthy menaces, drew himself up to his full height proudly, and with great dignity replied:

"You may do what you like, sir, but you will not succeed in frightening me, in driving me away from my post beside this Christian soul. It is an urgent case, gentlemen, and I call upon you in the name of that liberty of conscience you vaunt so loudly, to give me free access to this sick man's bed."

"Enough!" interrupted the *solidaire*, who no longer restraining himself, furiously snatched a pistol fixed to the wall and took aim at the venerable priest. "Depart this instant, or recommend your soul to your God."

Victor's father, out of himself, rushed forward, flung himself upon the wretch, wresting the pistol from him. But in vain they strove to recall him to himself; in vain the unhappy young girl threw herself on her knees, bathing his hands with her tears and imploring his pity; he repulsed them both furiously and would listen to nothing. Meanwhile the physician and his companion, each seizing one of the poor priest's arms, drew him out of the room, and hastened to close the door behind him.

"Sir," said they to him, "please observe that we can bear witness if necessary to your rash and entirely inopportune intrusion into this house where you were not invited, and are resolved to depose to your inexplicable conduct before a court of justice if you don't leave this instant."

Henceforth, all hope was lost, and the noble old man, going down stairs, slowly withdrew, with tears in his eyes and a prayer on his lips. But he had hardly crossed the threshold of the house, when the door of the sick man's room again opened with a bang. This time it was Van Dormael's brother, the *solidaire* himself, who bounded wildly down stairs.

"Horror, horror!" he cried. "Help, my friends. He's mad; he wants to assassinate me!"

The two companions, thinking he was just seized with a violent fever, sought to restrain him.

"It's no longer a man—it's a demon!" he cried, terrified. "Let us fly, let us fly, my friends; he will tear us to pieces."

The room of the dying man presented at that moment a dreadful spectacle. The unfortunate Ernest, stretched on the floor, was trying, by convulsive efforts, to escape from the arms of his sister and M. Morren, who was trying to hold him back.

"Let me go," he cried, "I'll follow them; I'll punish them—the monsters! They have sworn to deliver me alive to eternal torments? Where are they that I may tear them in pieces? They've sent for a priest to mock me, to mock my sufferings. No, no, I don't want a priest. I know how to die like a brave man; I am a freethinker!"

The wretch was delirious. Large, reddish blotches now spread over his livid face, his bloodshot eyes seemed starting from their sockets, and a whitish foam gathered on his already blackened lips.

"Where are they—where are they? Let them come—the freethinkers and the priests!" he cried madly. "I'll take care of them. Ha! ha! ha!" he pursued, in a burst of hellish laughter, "let them come—the cowards; let them show themselves if they dare!"

In a few moments his strength was exhausted, and M. Morren succeeded in raising him in his arms and replacing him in bed. He then stood beside his pillow in such a way as to be able to restrain him if another crisis supervened. But such a precaution seemed no longer necessary; he lay exhausted on his deathbed, motionless, speechless, and almost lifeless. Only from time to time a convulsive shuddering shook his limbs—the last flickering of the flame. His mouth was already wide open, his cheeks hollow and livid, his lips waxy pale; his eyes alone still gleamed vividly, while his face alternately assumed blackish or blueish, livid or purple hues.

With folded arms, gravely and silently, M. Morren kept his eyes fixed sadly on the dying man. He saw death rapidly approaching, and would have wished to allay the poor wretch's sufferings, but he had not in his heart a single word of consolation to address to his friend. He was forced to decline the combat, and leave Death—that implacable enemy, that judge of all sinners—free to torture this condemned patient, this unfortunate victim.

Victor's father, too, was scarcely conscious of what was going on around him. At one moment he thought himself stretched in his turn on that bed of pain awaiting the visit of his Sovereign Judge, struggling with death. All his resolution and all his courage were beginning to fail him; an enormous load weighed on his chest; he felt he was on the point of being suffocated, and instinctively sighed for a purer air, a calmer and more invigorating atmosphere.

The freethinker's sister was sobbing loudly, with her face bent over the pillow; she dared not fix her eyes on the convulsed countenance of that brother whose errors she had shared and whose miserable and dreadful agony she now contemplated.

Thus the moments passed. The sick man, from time to time, shuddered painfully; the *philosophe*, grave and motionless, meditated in silence; the young girl wrung her hands in mute despair; below stairs the three terrified *solidaires* emptied many a bumper to give themselves courage,—but nobody prayed in that accursed house.

And a sad and solemn silence had long reigned in that room, when at last a half-stifed rattle was heard in the dying man's throat. The young girl then raised her head; but at that moment Ernest's features had a less feverish and ferocious expression; consciousness, no doubt, was gradually returning.

"Ernest," she murmured in his ear, "shall I call back the priest?"

"The priest!" repeated the dying man in accents of rage and fury, as if that word alone had awakened all his hatred. "No, no, the priest begone! Haven't I told you already he can't help me?—that I am condemned, lost!—that there is no longer any possible pardon!"

M. Morren, then approaching the unhappy man, strove to calm him.

"Go away, go away; it's all over," said he, with a horrible burst of laughter. "It's come at last—that hour your nephew told me of before, you remember. 'An hour will come,' said he to me, 'when you'll wish in vain to believe; when you'll implore the assistance of a priest entreatingly, despairingly. But who knows if God will then consent to hear you?' Yes, yes, I see it; that hour has come at last. Here, here"—and, speaking thus, he clasped his hand across his burning breast—"I feel a fire burning me here; it's like a foretaste of the fire of hell that will soon engulf me. . . For I see it now. Morren, there is a hell, and there is a God, don't you know? . . Well, if you don't know it, it is I who tell it to you—I, the enemy of the Christians; I, the *libre penseur*. . . There is a God—and there is a hell!"

And he writhed convulsively on his bed, striving, in his anguish, to hide under his bed-clothes his brow, already inundated with the cold sweat of death. Suddenly, as if some horrible vision was unveiled to his sight, he shuddered dreadfully, opened his eyes affrightedly, and stretched forth his arms convulsively, as if to drive away some implacable phantom.

"Look!" he cried; "look! here they are! * * *

Here is your nephew, Van Dael, and the beggar-woman and Maso, and another, too. * * * Ah! I know him, too. That's Victor Morren, with Maso's dagger in his breast. It was I—yes, it was I who whetted that dagger; it was I who decided Maso to assassinate Victor. * * * Oh! the monsters, the tigers, the serpents, they are attacking me at their pleasure—me, weak and feeble! Oh! they are crushing me under their feet, they are rending my breast, they are tearing my heart out!"

And he cast his arms about feverishly and breathed painfully, while a convulsive gasping distended his throat as if some heavy burden was crushing him down.

At that moment the door opened and the sentinels of hell reappeared. The dying man recognized them and fixed a flashing glance upon his perfidious friends.

"Woe, woe!" he cried; "here they are, the accursed ones, the demons of hell who are coming to carry me away."

And, as if he felt the hand of death upon him at that moment, as if he wished to escape his inevitable fate, he bounded out of bed, dashing forward with all the frenzy of despair. But it was in vain. The poor wretch fell heavily upon the floor. The *libre penseur*—the freethinker—was dead, and Victor's father fled precipitately out of that accursed house.

When he returned home that night he witnessed another scene of grief and tears. He had scarcely entered the drawing-room when he uttered a piercing cry of pain and anguish. His wife, seated sadly in a corner, was weeping in the arms of her sister and her niece.

"What's the matter? What's the matter?" cried the old man distractedly.

Madame Morren, with a trembling hand, gave him a letter bearing the stamp of the Pontifical States. The unhappy father had no sooner glanced at it than he uttered a heart-rending scream, and, prostrated with grief, fell upon the nearest seat.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE TWO FATHERS.

"Good day, dear Nina,"

"Good day, Carlotta. And where are you coming from now, neighbor?"

Thus spoke, one pleasant December morning, two of the young girls whom we met in a previous chapter in the midst of their pleasant chat near the *Acqua Paolo*.

"And what do I see?" continued Nina, without giving her friend time to answer. "You've certainly been crying, for your eyes are quite red."

"Alas! yes; and if you were with me, neighbor, I'm certain you'd have wept too. I've left the Bianchi's, where I had been to see Nunziata, who is always busy nursing that young Zouave. Oh! Nina, one would have thought it was no longer a man but an angel—he's so sweet and patient and calm and—and—" here she began sobbing, covering her face with her handkerchief—"my heart is still ready to break when I think of it!"

"But I really thought he was getting better since yesterday!"

"Alas, no! . . I'm afraid the Lord will soon summon him to his heavenly Paradise."

"And yet we were so hopeful a few days ago when we went with Nunziata to pray to the *Madonna di San Agostino* to preserve his life! How moved I was at the grief of that poor Nunziata when, weeping so bitterly, she began to recite the Litany of the Blessed Virgin! How fervently we all responded to her humble prayer: 'Grazia, grazia, good Mary. You'll grant us grace, Mother of the Divine Saviour.'"

There is a pious and touching custom at Rome among the women of the people in the Trastevere quarter. When one of

their neighbors or friends is ill, the young girls of the neighborhood assemble, and repair in a body to the Church of Our Lady *dell' Orto*, or the Pantheon, or more particularly to St. Augustine's, to pray for the speedy recovery of the sufferer. Most of them prepare, by confession, for this work of charity, and, in token of penitence, go barefoot to the church. There they kneel humbly before the holy image, and, if the church is nearly empty, repeat in a loud voice, one after another, the Litany of the Blessed Virgin, to which all the others join, responding in chorus: "Grazia, Mary, Mother of God; grazia. Don't let us go without hope, without consolation; grant us this grace, O Mother!"

"And yet, I repeat, I believe our Lord means to call him to Himself," replied Carlotta, bowing down her head at those words of her friend. "For that young man is an angel—really an angel. He's too virtuous and innocent to remain on this earth. But I wish you saw with what affection and devotedness Nunziata cares for him night and day. Indeed she couldn't do more if it was her own brother."

"But how is it that this stranger is so well known to the Bianchi that they should treat him as one of the family?"

"*E chi lo sa?*" Stefano and Nunziata never told me why, and I suppose you don't imagine I could be the first to ask them. That would be nice, indeed! No, no, Nina; my father, *Maestro Toto*, brought me up too well for that, and my mother, *Sora Cecca*, whom you knew well (may she rest in peace) took care to recommend me always; 'Carlotta, my child, don't meddle with other persons' affairs, unless they wish to tell them to you.' But I think I can tell you that this young man is none other than that young foreign Zouave whom we saw passing one day near the *Acqua Paolo* with an unknown signor."

"Do you really think so? For my part I've no recollection."

"But I—I recollect," promptly retorted the young babbler, "and I remember the better, because, during the afternoon of the same day, I saw Stefano returning in company with that same Zouave, and entering along with him the Church of St. Peter in Montorio."

But, while the young girls were talking, Joseph and Martin, leaving the house along with Stefano, passed by them on their way to town.

"Exactly," resumed Carlotta. "I forgot to tell you that these two young men are the comrades and friends of the poor sick Zouave. They come from a very distant country, called Belgium, as Nina has told me, and are so attached to each other that they never quit their companion day or night. They're going to the station now, along with Stefano, to receive that poor young man's parents. Unhappy parents, and particularly the poor mother! How they'll suffer when they see their child dying so far away from home!"

But it was too true. The young invalid was none other than Victor; the fatigue and difficulties of the journey, and particularly, crossing the Apennines, had overpowered the poor convalescent, whose health was still very precarious, and resulted in a sickness which left little hope.

The first days of the journey had passed pleasantly enough, but Victor soon began to experience extreme fatigue and acute pains in the chest and side. The three friends had then to rest more frequently, and they were still afraid of falling into the hands of the Piedmontese; they had to continue the journey at any cost. In this perplexity Martin's broad shoulders were once more placed in requisition, to the great grief of Victor, who, to spare his devoted comrade this trouble, pretended to be stronger than he really was. He avoided as much as possible speaking of his fatigue, and yet, several times, after an hour's marching, his trembling knees gave way under him, and he was forced to rest under a tree.

But according as they approached the longed-for destination, the joy and happiness of reaching it seemed to give him strength. It was the last wish, the secret desire of his heart, to go to repose in God on that ground bedewed by the blood of so many glorious martyrs.

It was easy to perceive that his languor and suffering increased from day to day. Frequent weaknesses and a painful dry cough, accompanied with an acute pain in the side and chest, showed that the lungs were beginning to be affected.

On their arrival in Rome, a violent spitting of blood added to the young martyr's sufferings, and deprived his friends of their last hope. Still, according to Victor's earnest desire, they all three immediately repaired to Stefano's to bear the repentant Carbonar's farewell message, and announce the Christian death of his unfortunate brother.

They had just entered the Bianchi's house, when Victor was seized with a fatal hemorrhage which rapidly exhausted all his remaining strength. So, at Stefano's earnest entreaties, the young invalid was placed on a good bed in a quiet cheerful room at his new friends', who vied with each other in lavishing their care and devotedness upon him.

But it was easy to see that the poor patient's condition became each day graver and more painful. Joseph then hastened to write to his mother, begging her to break the news as cautiously as possible to Victor's parents.

Madame Van Dael then, in her brother-in-law's absence, went to her sister's to fulfil the painful mission with which she was charged.

"We have news at last of our children," she said, as soon as she reached the door. "Unfortunately this news is not the most reassuring."

"Alas! our children are dead!" cried the poor mother, seized with a painful presentiment.

"Very far from that!" responded the widow; "they've arrived at Rome. Joseph has written to me."

"And Victor? He doesn't write? You see he must be dead."

"I assure you, my dear sister, he is alive."

"The letter! show me the letter. Otherwise I couldn't believe you."

The unhappy mother took the letter and read it.

"O Lord, omnipotent God, Thy will be done," she murmured, returning it to her sister, and weak and speechless, fell into her arms.

It was at this moment the father arrived; and he was plunged into a state of indescribable stupor at the sight.

"What's to become of us? What shall we do?" he cried, when at last he had summoned up his courage.

"Ah! let us go—let us go to Rome!" cried the distracted mother, who seemed to derive new hope and strength from this sudden thought. "At least, our poor child shall not die alone, without having the happiness of seeing and embracing his parents again. God will permit him to live until we shall have seen him, that he may sleep in peace in his mother's arms."

M. Morren could not fail to approve of his noble and pious wife's resolution. The next day they were *en route*, having taken care to write beforehand to Joseph to announce their approaching arrival.

It was a great consolation to Victor to be able to indulge in the hope of soon embracing his good and loving mother. This pleasant prospect even seemed to have a favorable influence on his health, and his friends grew hopeful as his worn features began to wear an air of calmness and serenity.

The house the Bianchi occupied, and which Stefano had just left in company with Joseph and Martin, was distinguished from the other houses in the Trastevere by its modest and comfortable appearance and its extreme neatness. And yet the family was very much reduced from its former opulence since its departure from Naples; it could only be classed with the *paine* or *petits bourgeois* of Rome. However, the modest competence it still enjoyed would have enabled it to occupy a house in the finest quarters of the city. Nunziata and Stefano's father had preferred to select his dwelling in the midst of the Trastevere, where he could live more quietly with his children.

In a room on the second floor, in which the white curtains were carefully drawn down, Nunziata watched and prayed by

the bed of the young Zouave. Her prayer-book, wide open, rested on her knees, and in the midst of the silence she raised her head from time to time, fixing her glances on her dear patient, and seeking in her heart to divine his wishes.

On a table next the bed was placed a statue of the Blessed Virgin and a rich ivory crucifix—a souvenir of better days. The portrait of Victor's mother rested at the foot of the crucifix; thus the young man had placed the purest and most ardent of his earthly affections under the protection of the cross.

Suddenly he moved, and Nunziata, closing her book, raised her head.

"Do you wish for anything, Victor? What can I do for you?" she asked with visible solicitude.

"I don't wish for anything," he replied. "No, absolutely nothing, unless that you should make yourself more easy. Why so much sadness and tears, my poor Nunziata?"

"Alas!" she replied, "can you ask me? Can I forget the name, the crime of him who has put you in that state, Victor?"

"Always the same fancies, the same imaginings! Banish those sad thoughts from your mind Nunziata, I entreat, unless you wish to make me very unhappy."

The poor girl made no reply to those kind words, only, bowing down her head, she began to weep.

"You distress me very much, my poor Nunziata," he continued sadly.

"But, Victor," she resumed, in the midst of her sobs, "how can I help crying, when I see you perishing, languishing, and suffering thus? Wasn't he my brother, my own brother, he whose resentment, whose ferocious hatred pursued you to the death? Wasn't it his hand that struck you—struck you to death perhaps? Haven't I reason then to weep and suffer, thinking that he whom I loved so tenderly on this earth has thus persecuted and stricken down an innocent and noble defender of God and Holy Church, and that at the very moment he had committed that dreadful crime he was summoned to appear before his Creator and his angry Judge."

And as she spoke, Nunziata bowed her head, and again burst into tears. Victor, who heard her in silence, first gave her time to grow calm.

"Nunziata," said he at last with the utmost gentleness, "I repeat, your affliction is too acute and certainly unfounded. Why do you dread the sentence, the rigor of an inexorable Judge? Haven't I described to you the repentance, the profound sorrow of poor Gennaro in his last moments? I have no fears for his soul, for he died, in my arms, contrite and penitent, and the mercy of the Lord is sovereign and infinite. Believe me that the God of goodness has not granted him the grace of repentance in vain. Gennaro dead to earth, now lives the life of heaven; he has led me to you. Don't let his death afflict you, Nunziata, and the thought of eternal justice make you tremble! Would you, then, weakly despairing of your brother's repentance and salvation, place in doubt the sovereign power and infinite goodness of your Saviour Jesus?"

Here the exhausted invalid broke off for a moment. Nunziata then raised her head, which, until then, she had covered with her hands, and a smile of hope and consolation played over her pure features in the very midst of her tears.

"Certainly," continued the generous Victor, "your brother may have fallen; he may have committed faults, errors, but his repentance, his profound and sincere contrition have certainly effaced them. Oh! if you had seen him—as I saw him then—weeping for the faults, the errors of his life, and imploring God's grace and paternal mercy, and begging your pardon and Stefano's, you'd be as sure of his eternal salvation as I am myself. No, no, be assured, poor sorrowing sister, Gennaro, the child of so many tears, so many vows and prayers, can't be lost, can't be damned."

"O Victor, good Victor," replied the young girl with a sigh of gratitude, "you are really good and merciful as a saint, an angel of God."

"You've told me so already, but I know only too well that that's not true," he modestly interposed. "Come, let us put away that, and only try, my good Nunziata, to calm your disquietudes, to appear more joyful. Don't you know that the sight of your grief, your tears, pains me very much?"

But the young girl made no reply; she seemed to have relapsed into a profound melancholy.

"What's the meaning of this?" pursued Victor. "Have I, then, entreated you in vain, Nunziata?"

She tried to raise her head to answer him, but burst out sobbing.

"I can't forget," she cried in the midst of her tears, "that it was a brother's hand——"

"But, Nunziata," Victor hastily interposed, "believe me, Gennaro was not the author of my death."

"But who, then, was the cause?" she murmured.

"Your brother, my friend, was only the instrument of God's providence. And, besides, wasn't my wound rapidly cicatrised? Wasn't it the fatigues of the journey—that because God so willed it—took away all my strength and reduced me to this extremity. But don't forget, all that God ordains is good and just and intended for our happiness, for our everlasting glory. Blessed be God's providence that has given me, for heaven and eternity, a brother for whose salvation I'd have given my life a hundred times! But I expect another grace too from the sovereign goodness of God. You know, Nunziata, for whom I've often asked your prayers. I've another soul to gain—another victory to achieve, and then I'll return to my heavenly country. While you bewail the unfathomable decrees of the Almighty, of the God of mercy, I secretly bless the wound that has been and will yet be, I hope, a source of benediction and eternal happiness to me. Do you wish that I alone should rejoice at the mercies of God? Was I deceived, then, Nunziata, in counting on your fervent piety and perfect resignation?"

Here, exhausted by the efforts he had made, he stopped for an instant to take breath.

"Come," replied Nunziata rising, "I promise you to be calmer, and more resigned in future. Who could resist your touching exhortations, your good words of hope and consolation? But now," she continued more gaily, "I must call you to order, and scold you in turn, for you're exhausting yourself in trying to console others."

"That doesn't much matter," he replied with a gentle smile; "the time I've got to pass on earth is very short, and I ought to employ it usefully."

"Oh! I don't speak so; such ideas terrify me. We'll succeed in curing you, Victor, with the help of God. We'll pray fervently and perseveringly."

"Nunziata," he interrupted gravely, "for myself I wish for neither cure nor life; I feel that God calls me to Himself, and wish for nothing but the accomplishment of His holy will. Only I desire to see and embrace my dear parents again, and they'll be soon here."

In fact, at that very moment, Joseph opened the door and entered softly. As soon as Victor saw him, he cried out:

"Where are they? Oh! let them come—don't detain them any longer."

Then they both entered tremblingly.

"O Victor, my child!" they cried, mingling their tears and kisses.

"My father! my dear mother!" he cried, as they pressed him in their arms, and their sighs of joy commingled in the midst of a profound silence.

"I return Thee thanks, O Lord," exclaimed Victor at last, "for the supreme joy Thou hast given me to-day. Now, blest by Thee, I shall sleep in peace."

"O my child, my child, don't speak so!" murmured the afflicted mother. "God won't take you from our love. We'll cure you; you shall live to be the support and honor of our old age."

"No mother," he replied, "I shall not be cured; I feel it, I know it. The Lord will deign to accept our common sacrifice."

And you'll be resigned to His holy will, mother, won't you?"

The poor woman made no reply; at that trying moment her strength failed her; she could only press her son in her arms, weeping bitterly. She sat near the bed, still holding his hand, and placing her pale face on his breast, with an expression of affection and grief impossible to describe.

"And you, too, my dear father. Thanks, thanks, for not wishing your child should die alone!"

The unhappy Morren, to whom these words of gratitude were addressed, kept standing next the bed, with folded arms, sombre and motionless. He could not account for the conflicting sentiments and powerful emotions that at that moment moved his soul.

Throughout the entire journey he had unceasingly fought against the divine inspirations, against the grace that was sometimes beginning to touch him. At first he bitterly reproached himself for having allowed Victor to accomplish unrestrainedly his deplorable resolution—for having, in some sort, sent him to perish in a foreign land. But, at that supreme moment, his paternal affection was stronger than his rancor and resentment.

"O Victor, my poor child!" he cried, shedding a torrent of tears, "can I reproach you, when I find you wounded and dying on your bed of pain? . . . Oh! no, no," he continued, casting himself into the arms of his son, "I'll not infuse gall and bitterness into your last moments. . . . Only, you may be sure, I'll not be long after you. . . . What consolation, what joy, can remain to me when you are taken from me!"

"God will remain to you!" said the young man in a grave, solemn voice, as if inspired, "God, the great Consoler, the hope of the despondent and the strength of the weak—God, who never abandons those who confide in His goodness. . . . O father, father, if you only knew how short and light will be the separation which is only the pledge, the promise of future reunion! O dear father, will you not turn to God?"

The *philosophe* moved, but not convinced, kept a profound silence.

"Father, will you let your son die in the dread and sorrow of an eternal separation?"

"But you will not die, my son," interposed the mother. "The Lord has always miraculously preserved you until now. He will grant this favor to our prayers and tears."

"My dear mother," Victor calmly replied, "do not let yourself be deluded by the illusions of your love, but rather prepare for the accomplishment of that Divine will which I am sure has led me here and has really called me. And then—my sacrifice, mother, my sacrifice!"

And it seemed Victor had spoken truly, for, from that moment, a rapid and fatal change took place in his condition. The last faint ruddy hues disappeared from his hollow cheeks. First a painful oppression stopped his breathing; then a racking cough, which, draining his last strength, terrified and saddened the hearts of those around him.

The physician, who only came once in the course of the day, was immediately sent for, and, on his arrival, shook his head mournfully when he saw the patient. However, he applied the stethoscope, and attentively examined him, while Morren and his wife anxiously watched every movement, striving to read their fate in his eyes, in the expression of his face.

At length the physician drew near Stefano and the two Zonzaves.

"I'm very much afraid of the rupture of a new blood vessel, and, consequently, a new hemorrhage to-night," said he. "In my opinion they ought not to put off any longer the administration of the sacraments to this poor young patient."

"So, sir," said M. Morren, addressing the physician, "you have just pronounced sentence. According to you there is no other remedy; all hope is then lost?"

"Believe me, it is very painful to me to be obliged to deprive you of a last hope; but I think I am acting honestly in telling you the whole truth. It is true, sir, your son may live some days yet, and I wouldn't have insisted so earnestly on his re-

ceiving the last sacraments to-day if I were not afraid that an approaching hemorrhage might put an end to his sufferings."

Meanwhile the physician's sentence had been communicated to the young patient.

"I ardently desire to receive those divine helps," he said, "and I would have asked for them myself long since if I were not animated with the secret hope of again seeing my dear parents."

Then Stefano went for the priest, while Nunziata, with the help of Joseph and Martin, prepared everything necessary for the solemn ceremony.

The unhappy, dejected, and disheartened father stood mute and motionless at the foot of the bed, while his wife, with maternal care, arranged the snow-white pillows and warm bed-clothes around the wasted frame of her poor child. That heroic mother, who seemed for an instant ready to succumb to the dread and anguish of this approaching separation, had now recovered all her courage, calmness, and firmness. The irrevocable decree which the physician had pronounced, and which, to all appearance, should have broken her heart, seemed on the contrary to have inspired her with supernatural tranquility and divine strength. She had knelt for a moment before the crucifix, imploring the calmness and courage necessary at this trying moment; she had then seen her portrait, placed by her son's hands at the foot of the cross, and recalled that other Mother of Sorrows who in the midst of her dreadful agony contemplated her Son suffering and dying for the salvation of men. Thus, in her profound grief, but calm and resigned, she had united her sacrifice to the bloody sacrifice of Calvary.

"Mother," said Victor, in a scarcely audible voice, when she bent over him to press her lips to his forehead, "mother, are you satisfied now with all the Lord has willed and done?"

"O my dear child," she replied, "why shouldn't I be satisfied, seeing you so happy, so resigned, so calm!"

"Mother," said he again, "do you believe we'll be heard at last? You know well what I mean——"

"Let us hope," she replied. "Let us always pray and hope."

"O mother, how happy I'd be to die if that cherished hope were at last realised!"

At that moment the priest entered, and, as he crossed the threshold, said: "Peace be to this house!"

"And to all those who inhabit it?" responded the acolyte clad in a white tunic.

All those present then quitted the room, leaving the young invalid to confess his sins to the servant of God, and, a few minutes after, the pure and innocent soul beamed calmer and purer still, thanks to the benediction of the minister of the Lord.

The priest then re-opened the door, and Victor's friends, silent and deeply moved, came to kneel by the bed. The unhappy father, fainting and almost beside himself, had dropped on his knees in the darkest corner of the room. Not a tear came to refresh his dry eyes and burning cheeks, although he would have given all the world to be able to cry. Victor's mother had resumed her place at the head of the bed.

After a short pause the priest began to recite the touching prayers of the Church. Meanwhile, Nunziata had spread over the invalid's bed a fine damask cloth of dazzling whiteness, and while the acolyte recited the *Confiteor*, the priest prepared to administer to the young martyr the Holy Viaticum—the bread of angels, the bread of the strong, the divine nourishment. The young man's eyes suddenly beamed with joy, happiness, and ecstasy when the priest presented to his gaze the divine Lamb of God, the holy Host, sacred pledge of our redemption.

All was over. The Divine Heart of Jesus reposed on the heart of His dying servant in that moment of indescribable ecstasy and happiness. Suddenly the young martyr's brow seemed illumined, as it were, with a dazzling aureole—one had said a reflection of the eternal beatitude crowning him one of the elect.

The priest then began to administer Extreme Unction, followed by the solemn *Miserere*, which, despite its profound sadness and heart-rending sorrow, exhales a perfume of confidence so sweet to the Christian soul.

The poor father, in his obscure corner, listened; and it seemed that each of those divine words fell like heavenly dew upon his long-hardened heart, until at last he found solace in a torrent of tears. At the moment the priest uttered the words:—"A sacrifice to God is an afflicted spirit; a contrite and humble heart, O God, Thou never wilt despise,"—it seemed that a ray from heaven scattered a cloud that had long been before the old man's eyes. The priest continued to pray; but the repentant sinner heard no more, and seemed to be no longer conscious of what was going on around him. He had buried his face in his hands, and big burning tears trickled through his fingers.

Long, very long, he remained given up to this solemn meditation, plunged in a profound contemplation, motionless and distracted. The priest had already left, carrying with him the Holy of Holies, and followed by his acolyte, when the old man, radiant, and, as it were, transfigured, suddenly raised his head, and fixed a wandering, dazed look on the bed of suffering. Then he stood up, took a few steps forward, and fell into the arms of his son, whom, in his joy, he covered with tears and kisses.

"O Victor, dear Victor, it's all over," he sobbed. "It's all over; you have conquered. I believe, my God; I believe as my beloved Victor."

Another cry—a cry of victory and happiness—responded like a triumphant echo to this joyful exclamation, and Victor's mother, intoxicated with joy and surprise, mingled her tears of gratitude with the tears of her dying son and her converted spouse.

But Victor soon disengaged himself from his parent's arms. A truly heavenly joy irradiated his countenance. He gazed for a moment affectionately on the loved faces of that father whose blindness and errors he had so long deplored, and that noble mother who had so courageously shared his sacrifice; then raised his joyful eyes to heaven.

"And now, Lord," he cried, "Thou wilt let Thy servant die in peace, for his eyes have seen Thy salvation according to Thy holy word. I return Thee thanks, O God of Goodness, for Thy constant protection, Thy infinite mercy. O God, Thou hast heard my prayer, and accepted my sacrifice. For I can now reveal the mysteries of Thy goodness; I can henceforth loudly proclaim that before leaving my home and country I had offered Thee my life to obtain from Thee the most precious of Thy graces—the conversion of my beloved father. O mother, mother," he continued, turning towards the happy spouse, "did I not tell you that evening under the tunnel that the voice that called me was truly the voice of God? Oh! happy are we to have faithfully obeyed that voice! And thanks to you, my good Joseph," he continued, turning towards his cousin, "it was your generous devotion, your courageous resolution that inspired me with the thought of sacrificing myself to obtain the salvation, the happiness of my father!"

The unhappy Morren had no sooner heard these words, which revealed to him the secret of Victor's heroic resolution, than for the second time he felt suffocated by his tears, astounded and prostrated by the sublimity of that filial devotion which, in his culpable incredulity and blindness, he had not even suspected.

"O Victor, Victor, what love!" he cried through his tears. "Oh! woe to me—me, impious wretch, who dared, in my ignorance, to accuse you of ingratitude, to compare you to a serpent whom I had cherished in my breast, while at that very moment you were about to consummate this supreme sacrifice for me! Oh! dear child, noble child," he continued, falling on his knees by the bedside; "can I ever console myself for having so far doubted your love! Forgive, forgive me, my child, my dear Victor! Oh! can you still love your wretched father?"

"Enough, enough, dear father, your words rend my heart,"

interrupted Victor, deeply moved. "I assure you I have nothing to reproach you with, nothing to forgive you. Was not your whole conduct inspired by the sincere love you felt for your child? And—now that he is sincerely reconciled to God—you ask me if I can love that father whom I have always so tenderly loved, even in the midst of his errors? O father, O mother, come to my arms—to my heart, where the God of mercy and grace, in His infinite love, has descended—and let a loving kiss unite us three in peace with Him!"

Then, gently clasped in each other's arms, they forgot for a few moments the profound anguish of the approaching separation.

Suddenly, confused clamors arose outside, before the door of the house.

"Here's the *Bambino* of Ara Cœli," cried several voices.

In fact, at that moment, a large brown carriage, carefully closed, and with the doors veiled with long red hangings, might be seen advancing at the end of the street. It contained two religious of the Order of Friars Minor, one wearing a stole, while the other held in his hand a lighted taper.

This carriage was that of the *Bambino* of Ara Cœli, or miraculous image of the Infant Jesus, greatly venerated by the Romans, particularly at the approach of death. When the pious young man felt his strength decreasing and his end approaching, he had requested the priest who had come to administer the sacraments to him to procure him this favor. The carriage having stopped before Stefano's door, the two priests alighted and bore the holy image into the sick man's room. Then the young martyr's eyes were seen to beam joyfully at the approach of the good fathers and the image of the Saviour. He humbly bowed his head to receive the benediction so ardently desired, while a prayer of thanksgiving, as pure as it was fervent, arose from the bottom of his soul to the throne of the Eternal.

Another favor, too, was reserved for him—the Pontifical blessing sent by the Holy Father to his expiring son.

"O mother," murmured Victor in a broken voice, "mother, now I can die. . . . I am very, very happy. . . . But, my good mother, we must not——"

And here, as if destiny was hastening to bear witness to the truth of his words, a kind of convulsive hiccough, and dull, suffocating rattling suddenly smothered his voice. These fatal symptoms were soon accompanied with a painful oppression; every instant the rattling seemed to rise and increase in intensity and power. Suddenly, a dreadful fit of coughing tore at the invalid's chest, and that very instant, according to the doctor's fatal forecasting, a stream of blood issued from his mouth.

At this sight the unhappy father uttered a terrible cry, and rushed forward as if he would have protected and defended against the approaches of death that tenderly-loved son whom his calmer and more courageous wife heroically sustained in her arms, gently pressing his drooping head to her breast.

Night had come, and Nunziata rose and lit the lamp, while the profoundest silence reigned throughout that chamber of mourning.

The hemorrhage seemed to have brought momentary relief to the poor young invalid, who lay upon his bed, pale and weak, but calm; his cheeks sunken, his features drawn, his lips livid, big drops of cold perspiration trickling every instant over his brow, while the counterpane moved every time his chest rose with his broken breath.

It was about midnight; Joseph and Martin, Nunziata and Stefano, began to pray, next the table at the end of the room. The weeping parents had not quitted their place at the bedside. A priest who had come to attend the invalid in his last moments was silently turning over the pages of his Breviary. The unhappy father, overwhelmed with grief, felt all his courage vanishing at the approach of the terrible and inevitable separation; but the mother, courageous like a true Christian mother, seemed, in the moment of trial, to have recovered all her calmness and firmness. She knew that the Lord willed that she should give up her son to Him, and in her admirable

submission, in her heroic constancy, she had succeeded in subduing all sentiment, all natural weakness, in order the more easily to resign herself to the accomplishment of God's adorable will.

The young man had moved on his bed of pain.

"Are you suffering much, my child?" she asked.

"Yes, mother, much, God be praised for it," he replied with great calmness. And then, after a short pause: "Do you think, mother, that I shall suffer much longer?"

"It will be as God shall wish," she responded.

"You are right," he replied. "I desire only the accomplishment of Thy divine will, O my God! Do with me as Thou wilt, and as long as Thou wilt." And he piously kissed the crucifix that his mother presented to his lips.

"What day will to-morrow be?" he asked after a moment.

"Saturday, my child."

"Oh! so much the better. I shall die on a day consecrated to my Immaculate Mother."

At these words the poor father burst into tears.

"Oh Victor, my child, what are you saying? You shall not die!" he cries. "It is impossible my son should die."

"Oh, dear father," interrupted Victor, "how can you be so afflicted and weep when I feel so happy? . . . Yes, what happiness, what inexpressible happiness!" he repeated after an instant's pause. "My God calls me to Himself and wishes to rejoice me with His Divine Presence!"

But still the old man wept bitterly and would not be consoled.

"O father," resumed Victor, in a caressing tone and with angelic tenderness. "Why do you abandon yourself to such bitter grief? . . . You love me, however, and desire my glory and happiness before anything."

His father had not the strength to reply immediately to those tender words.

"Father," he continued, "think our separation will be short. Yes, short, and, above all, happy, my dear father. . . . Cannot you console yourself in thinking that you have a son in heaven who died for the honor and glory of his God?"

The poor father raised his head a calm smile of resignation shone through his tears. He now understood the divine language of faith.

The dying man then stretched out his already icy hand to his companion in arms.

"My dear Joseph," he murmured, "thanks for love and affectionate care. Remember me to your good mother and sister. And you, my dear Martin, you who have so valiantly exposed your life to save mine, receive my thanks; don't forget your friend."

He then turned to Stefano.

"And you, generous friend," he continued in a voice still weaker and more tremulous, "you and your amiable sister who, in caring for me, have given me another home and another country, let me thank you a thousand times for your kindness and affection towards a poor stranger. . . . Farewell, friends; farewell, all. I'll not forget you in my heavenly country. . . . As to you, father," he continued, turning towards the priest, "remember me, I conjure you in your prayers at the altar of God."

"And you, my dear child," replied the old man, with affectionate gravity, "remember me when you are before His throne!"

Then there was a long silence, broken only by the stifled sobs and murmurs of the young man's friends.

The clock already marked the first hour of day, when the harsh, hollow death-rattle was again heard.

"Mother," murmured Victor, "The moment is now approaching—"

"Well—must we pray, my child?" she asked.

"Yes, mother, thanks."

She herself then began the prayers for the agonizing, and her maternal voice, which had ceased to tremble, was sweet and consoling to his dull ear.

Suddenly he was seen to shudder and tremble, and stretch

out his arms towards his mother. A more violent rattling then tore at his throat, and a torrent of frothy blood issued from his mouth.

"Mother, I am dying," he murmured. "Life is going. . . I am dying——"

"My child," she replied with heroic firmness, "our God is good and great; may His holy will be done. We will recite the *Te Deum* for your deliverance, my son."

And that glorious and triumphant chant, the finest and sublimest victorious hymn of joy ever inspired, was breathed at that moment from the lips of that heroic mother by the death-bed of her beloved son.* And while the hymn of thanksgiving arose to heaven, the priest's hand was extended to give the last benediction to the soul about to begin its journey.

"O mother, father," murmured Victor, with a last glance and a last smile, "we will meet again in the glory and peace of the Lord. . . . My Saviour, I love Thee! . . . O my God, Jesus, and Mary!"

And the soul had received the kiss of peace from the lips of the body, while the body, stretched motionless and lifeless, now reposed in the shadow of death.

But the martyr was already crowned; the peace and brightness of heaven caressed his pure and tranquil brow, his noble smiling countenance, with their divine rays.

Next morning the converted *philosophe* and his afflicted wife alighted from a carriage at the gate of the Vatican.

Victor's father desired, first of all, to pour his grief into the bosom of the noble Pontiff. When he was admitted to the presence of the Holy Father, he immediately threw himself at his feet, which he bedewed with tears.

"O Holy Father," he murmured in the midst of his tears, when the Pontiff, profoundly moved, gave him his hand to kiss, "our child has kept his word: he has sacrificed himself; he has died for his two fathers!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

CONCLUSION.

The young martyr's parents, who now occupy their country house at Schrambeck all the year round, still suffer from the deep cruel wound the premature death of their beloved son inflicted on their hearts; but time is gradually softening the anguish of that sorrow, which they bear like Christians.

At the foot of that bed of death, where he saw his son smile upon him and sleep in peace, the *philosophe* bade adieu to all the vain errors of his proud reason. Before quitting Rome, he was solemnly reconciled to God, and the tears he shed over his son's tomb were the humble, fervent, patient, sincere tears of a Christian. He is now the friend of the venerable pastor of Schrambeck, and the members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul have elected him president of their confraternity. Along with his amiable wife, he has become the support, consolation, and visible Providence of all who suffer and mourn. The dwelling of the *libre-penseur* of former days has become the refuge where the sick and indigent seek health, consolation and hope; and the prayer of gratitude daily ascends to God from more than one grateful heart, invoking His benediction on that justly-revered roof.

Joseph and Martin, on their return to Schrambeck, were received with lively demonstrations of joy and sincere respect. Since then Joseph has married; he had the happiness to find an amiable and charming wife, who united her efforts to those of her husband and his pretty sister Mary to make Madame Van Dael's old age as calm and happy as a fine summer evening. Indeed, the good lady seems to grow younger every day,—she is so proud, happy, and contented to see a charming little boy, whom she is accustomed to call Joseph—although in memory of his grandfather he bears the name of Henry—playing about her.

* This is an historical fact.

As to the good and brave Martin, he had the misfortune to lose his mother, old Teresa, a few months after his return. On her death-bed the pious mendicant, having made him draw near, addressed to him these words:

"My dear child, I am satisfied with you: you have done your duty. You have saved our good Joseph's life, and if Victor Morren is dead, it is not your fault. But I have another advice to give you now. As soon as you will have laid me in the ground, take care and go to Rome. When you went there first, it was not so much to serve the Pope as to pay your old mother's debt of gratitude; this time you will go simply for love of our good Father, the glorious Pius IX. I hope you will know how to find your way without anybody's help."

Martin made it his duty to obey these last instructions. After having prayed over his mother's grave, he hastened to return to Italy, where he resumed his place in the ranks of the Zoraves.

His first care, on arriving in Rome, was to visit his friend Stefano, who now alone occupies the house in the Trastevere. The good and amiable Nunziata, whose sincere piety, after Victor's death, became still more fervent, has separated herself forever from that world which had filled her youth with so many trials and sorrows, and consecrated herself to God in the silence and solitude of the cloister, where she soon became a model to her pious sisters, thanks to the tender charity, humility, and devotion which characterise her whole conduct, and where every day she never ceases to join, to the offering of her virtues, that of her prayers, to obtain from God the soul's rest and heavenly beatitude for the unfortunate brother to whose salvation she had devoted her efforts, her vows, and her life.

These few words suffice to tell my readers all they wish to know, and I have now reached the end of this story, which, in all its developments and details, has been to me a labor of predilection and love.

Our age, indeed, is an age of selfishness and cowardice, of corruption and error; but, nevertheless, pearls of innocence, honor, and virtue, by God's grace, are seen glittering here and there over the surface of this marsh, in the midst of that mud. And I have sought—according to the measure of my modest capacity—to draw from its obscurity, and fashion and polish, one of those priceless pearls, that it might shine, in all its splendor, before the eyes of the world.

Other pens more capable, other voices more eloquent have, I know, likewise celebrated this devotion and these virtues. But what matter? Although my name be obscure, although my voice be feeble, my lips shall never cease to proclaim your praises, to celebrate your glory, generous and valiant champions of justice, champions of faith, champions of the God of truth!

When impious conquerors strove to erase from the pages of history the sacred principles of religion and right, you replied to that challenge by arming for the holiest cause on earth. When rash enemies combined to shake the foundations of faith, you raised like a rampart of steel around the See of Peter your brows, your arms and your breasts. When vile enemies dared to declare war against the omnipotent God, you shed your generous blood and gathered the martyrs' palms. May eternal glory be given you, victims and heroes in peace and in war! The olive and laurel branches unite to form the diadem where-with you are crowned.

MARIE.

MY friend Valentine was sitting with me one day, and we were speaking of a man loaded with benefits, who that very morning had been arraigning the justice and mercy of God. These murmurs of the prosperous always raise strong indignation in my heart. On recalling the conversation some hours after it had passed, I could not help censuring it in a manner which might be thought excessive. My friend remarked it, smiling as if he were wiser than I was, although he was my junior by four or five years; and his naturally good temper checked me, when he feared that I was becoming too bitter.

"Like you," he said, "I cannot see, without some irritation a man make an imaginary misfortune a ground for bringing an accusation against God. But because of this feeling, I think, that when we are removed from the society of those that do so, it is best not to recall their melancholy words, but to endeavor to think of actions precisely the reverse. Both you and I detest from our hearts the sin of ingratitude towards either God or man; well, let us seek an example of the contrary virtue, and that will profit both of us much more than condemning the vice. For my part, I have a story all ready. Now, stir up the fire, and I will begin.

"You have not forgotten when we first became acquainted. It was at your native town, where I happened to be residing for a few months, studying medicine with a good doctor there. Having been brought up entirely in the country by my grandfather, I was somewhat shy and reserved, and did not seek to make any acquaintance. My chief pleasures were rambles in the neighborhood, and on the sea-shore; and I have often passed hours lying on the grass, or sitting on the rocks, but always with a favorite book in my hand. My walks had seldom any particular object in view; and so it happened, that one day I found myself in a narrow valley watered by a bright stream, with one side bordered by fields, and the other by a little wood of oaks and beeches. (The stream, at this point, parted

in two, leaving a little island not more than four or five yards across, and a sudden fall in the ground produced the prettiest cascades imaginable, the water dancing and sparkling over the moss-covered pebbles, until, in a shower like fine rain, it reached a pool below, whence it quietly continued its course. It required no effort to spring from the meadow to the little island, as the stream just there was very narrow; and I can hardly explain to you the pleasure I had in taking possession of my newly discovered domain. I threw myself at the foot of a tree which proudly raised its head from amidst the bushes with which the islet was covered, and for an hour lay there doing absolutely nothing; the murmuring of the water and the sensation of perfect repose, threw me into a half-dreaming state, most pleasant to experience, yet difficult to describe.

"I was roused at last by a slight noise, and looking through the bushes, I saw a little girl clinging to the back of a large Newfoundland dog, who was bringing her to my island. The child's head rested on the animal's back, and her fair curls mingled with the rough coat of her robust companion. They got safely to shore without perceiving me. However, when I arose and approached the little girl, who was sitting on a bank of convolvulus, her faithful guardian gave a low growl, which sufficiently intimated his suspicion of my intentions. The child, too, though she endeavored to smile, was evidently not very well satisfied with my appearance, and pale as she was when I first saw her, she blushed rosy red as she tried to cover her poor little bare feet with her wet frock. I thought at first it was fear of me that prevented her rising, as she still remained in the same attitude, leaning on her elbow, half hidden by the tall grass.

"Go and fetch them, Neptune," she said, pointing to the other side of the stream.

"Before obeying, Neptune fixed his large, anxious eyes on my face, and then came to lick my hand, as if he intended to

into the water, and returned in a few seconds, carrying in his mouth a pair of little crutches.

"The child was paralytic.

"Nothing inspires one with deeper pity than the sight of these great human afflictions in the young. In old age we expect to see the limbs refusing to bear their weight, to see the eyes dim, if not quite dead to the light of the sun—those privations loosen the attachment of the soul to the earth, which she must soon leave—but to see these infirmities in one whose life is only just opening, is very melancholy; and I needed nothing more to induce me to address the child with pity and compassion in my voice. She could not mistake my feelings, and having raised herself from the ground, with the help of her hands clasping Neptune, she allowed me to take her to the shade of the tree under which I had been so long resting.

"I wished to know what brought her to the little island. She told me that while her grandmother was seeking mushrooms in the meadow for the market, she, on her part, assisted to fill the basket by gathering watercresses and crocuses, which met with a ready sale. This occupation would have been dangerous for the infirm child, had it not been for the vigilant assistance of the dog, who seated himself gravely close to her on the edge of the stream, and was always ready to seize her dress in case of an accident. Besides, the water was very shallow. The child surprised me by saying she was nine years old; she did not look more than six, she was so small and thin. Her face alone showed vigor, and notwithstanding the paleness, it was full of intelligence.

"A child's confidence is quickly gained. It was sufficient for me to caress Neptune and to reach a remarkably fine bunch of watercresses, which being in a deeper part of the stream, she could not otherwise have obtained, to hear the history of all her family.

"'Grandmother is named Lemaire,' Marie said to me, 'and we both live on what she can earn by a little washing, and by selling the mushrooms and cresses we get here and in some other fields. I hardly remember father. I know that he was coming home from a voyage, very happy, because he knew that he should find a little baby,—for mother had written to tell him so. Mother went up the cliff to the lighthouse, to see his ship enter the harbor. There she met a foolish woman, who asked her what ship she was looking for. My mother told her, 'Oh! do you not know that ship was wrecked just round the point, and every soul on board was lost?' A ship in full sail was just coming in, which mother, while going up the cliff, had taken for the one she was expecting (which it really was), but now she thought so no longer. She came down the hill, and when she got home lay down on the bed. Grandmother said, 'Take courage, because of the child our good God is going to give you;' but she would not listen to her, and turned her face to the wall, that she might see nobody. She was lying so, very ill, and the doctor with her, when she heard father's step in the passage.

"'Two days after mother died, kissing me—for, do you know, I was the baby she had promised father he should see. He went to sea again, and I have seen him two or three times between his voyages; but I only remember one thing about him, and that was how he cried when he found I was paralyzed. Grandmother used to say to me, 'Do this to please father,' or 'Learn that, because father will be glad when he comes home;' but one day she put on me a black frock, and told me that father was gone to heaven where mother was. I was very sorry; and grandmother asked the neighbors to let their children come in to play with me. These children jumped and danced, and ran about as much as they liked; and when they found that I could not do the same, they used to beat me and call me sulky. The children have become much kinder now they are older, but they teased me so much, I asked grandmother not to let them come to our cottage, for I liked much better to listen to her stories, and to play alone with Neptune. He was only a puppy then; and father had brought him from a long way off on purpose for me.'

"These are almost the exact words in which Marie told her

story; and as her eyes sparkled with the precocious intelligence so often displayed in sickly children, I was thinking on the unhappy lot which Providence appears to have assigned to some amongst us. Marie had continued making up her nose-gays while she was talking; and as her grandmother had now advanced to the opposite side of the stream, she threw over to her the fruits of her industry. She then prepared to regain the field on Neptune's back; but I raised her in my arms, and springing across, deposited her safely by her grandmother's side, who could not find words to thank me sufficiently for what she was pleased to call such condescension.

"After exchanging some friendly words, the old woman yoked the dog to a little chaise, into which she lifted the child, and then heaped around her the spoils they had collected. Flowers—yellow, lilac, and pink—formed a kind of frame for the child's sweet pale face, which I followed with my eyes until they had reached the gate which led into the road, when, turning the angle, they disappeared, Marie to the last waving her little hands in sign of adieu.

"In my childhood I had been taught to love visiting the poor, and now that by necessity I was separated from my dearest friends, I eagerly seized this opportunity which seemed to be presented to me, of putting in practice the lessons I had so early received. This old woman, with her wrinkled face and back bent with labor, but still supporting herself and her afflicted grandchild by her honest industry, was precisely one of the class which had been pointed out to me as eminently deserving of the respect and help of those above them in worldly station. I am sure that it is a most happy circumstance for a young man, living alone as I was, to find two or three poor families on whom he can bestow a little money, a little time, a little friendship; if he chooses, he can draw down abundant blessings on himself through such intercourse.

"Mrs. Lemaire dwelt in a very small cottage, much out of repair, close to the convent of the Sisters of Charity. I generally went to see her when Marie had returned from the school which the good nuns had the charge of. I often amused myself with hearing her repeat the lessons, and was astonished at the aptitude she displayed for learning, and especially for religious instruction. The faith of this dear child was so lively, that the Gospel histories, which she could repeat by heart, were often finished by a burst of tears she could not repress. We were reading together what we are told of our Lord receiving little children:—

"'Oh! if I had been there,' said Marie, 'Neptune would have managed to get through the crowd with me, and so I should have been able to touch the hand of my Saviour with my lips. What do you think He would have done when He saw my little crutches? Do you not think that He would have cured me directly?'

"The idea, almost the hope of a miraculous cure, frequently returned to her. However, her infirmities never impaired her bright happy disposition. These very misfortunes procured for her certain little privileges which at once flattered her innocent self-love, and filled her little heart with gratitude. One winter's day I met her coming from school, surrounded by the other children, who were all engaged in a friendly contest as to who should be the closest to her, and most completely protect her. Marie explained to me that there was a boys' school close by, and that the rude boys there amused themselves by pelting with snow-balls the little girls of the school. However, as if to prove the falseness of the saying of a certain writer, that childhood is an age without compassion, as soon as these unruly lads saw Marie pursuing her way with difficulty on the slippery road, a cry arose at once from amongst them, 'Let the lame girl pass! No pelting until she has passed!' Marie thanked the boys with a smile and inclination of her head; and her grandmother, on hearing the story, experienced a kind of pride in the misfortune of the child, which had checked even these rough boys in the midst of their amusement, and called forth for the moment their better dispositions.

"I fancy I can still see Mrs. Lemaire's room. A large bed

at the end, a little crib between the fire-place and the window; in one of the corners an old chest, in the other a cuckoo clock. On the table in the window was an earthen dish with rose-leaves in it, which the good woman had placed in the sun to dry. Three chairs of the humblest description were near the fire-place, and over it, on the shelf, was an image of our Lady in plaster, who, all through the summer, held a bunch of wild flowers in her hand. There was one picture on the wall—the Flight into Egypt. Marie had an immense admiration for this picture; and she also cultivated a great intimacy with the cuckoo, who clapped his wings and cried cuckoo as each hour came round. You must excuse these minute details; but the recollection of this humble market-woman and her grandchild, who loved me well, and whose example was most salutary to me, is a bright spot in my heart. For two years I never passed a week without at least once taking a seat at their friendly hearth; they imagining themselves my debtors for the trifling assistance I afforded them, while, in reality, I owed them much which I could never repay. The old woman frequently expressed her astonishment that I found time to visit them, when what she considered the best society of the town was open to me. I endeavored to change her opinion, by pointing to her, in its true colors, the ordinary intercourse of the world.

“‘True friendship,’ I said to her, ‘may be found in all ranks; but these very fine ladies and gentlemen, who profess so much, if they heard I were ill and dying, would send their compliments and enquiries to me, and go to a ball in the evening as cheerfully as ever; while you, I know, would watch over me like a mother, and Marie would hobble to the church, and spend the last penny in the house for a candle to burn for me before the altar of our Lady, Help of Christians.’”

“Mrs. Lemaire listened attentively to what I said, and the child, fixing her large eyes on me, thanked me by a look, which expressed much more than words could do. Neptune, too, licked my hand, as if he wished to assure me that he joined in the affectionate regard of the cottage.

“Some people say that anxiety for the necessities of life dries up the hearts of the poor; but I have seen many times proofs of the contrary; and I affirm that a thirst for pleasure and luxury has made more selfish beings than all the poverty in the world. I must tell you of their charity to those poorer than themselves. This old woman, who was obliged, when she returned from the fields or the market in a heavy rain, to wear still her wet clothes on her limbs, stiffened with rheumatism, for want of others,—this woman, I say, in the midst of her indigence, found a thousand opportunities of doing good. Much of the produce of the fields, which she gathered with so much labor, found its way to the sick of the neighborhood. She was famous for her skill in preparing those infusions of herbs which country people still have so much faith in; and many a night she passed by a sick bed, when the patient was too poor to engage a hired nurse. Other and higher assistance she was also well able to afford, for, she herself a model of patience, submission, and confidence in God, was listened to with gratitude and hope by many a poor sufferer in need of learning to practise these virtues.

“I have now arrived at the period when the event occurred which is the point of my story.

“Marie was now eleven years old. For some months she had been under instruction, and now, in a week, she was to make her First Communion. I was on my way to call at the cottage, but passing the church, I went in. At a side altar, on which was the image of our Lady, I saw the child kneeling, quite absorbed in her prayers. A ray of sun shone full on her face, and I was so struck with the expression of ardent faith and the sweetest tenderness of devotion, that I could not help speaking of it to the old woman. Often I have given her a trifle of money to assist her in preparing some little signs of festivity on the great day of Marie's First Communion. She became pensive, and with some hesitation, said :

“‘I promised to say nothing about it; but I must tell you, to whom I tell everything. Marie began yesterday a Novena to our Lady, Help of Christians, to obtain through her a miracle;

the poor child is persuaded that she will be able to walk without crutches on the day of her First Communion!’”

“This declaration, made in a broken voice, silenced me for a moment.

“The old woman sighed, called in Neptune, who was sleeping in the sun outside, shut the cottage door, and then, taking up her knitting, she went on with her story with more composure.

“‘Marie has been so enjoying the idea of your surprise, for I have not been able to persuade her that it is possible our good God may not see fit to grant her what she asks. This morning she begged me not to tell you anything about it until after her cure. Poor darling; yesterday, in play, she put the end of one of her crutches into the fire. I called out to her to take care lest it should be burnt. She said, ‘In a week I shall want it no more, but run about like other children.’”

“Mrs. Lemaire turned her head away, and taking off her spectacles, wiped them. ‘I must get some new ones,’ she said; ‘I am growing old, and my sight is dim.’ Her sight, indeed, was dim, but it was with tears.

“‘We have all heard of many miraculous cures,’ I replied, with some hesitation. ‘How is it that Marie has not imparted to you some of her strong hopes, as it is from your pious example that she has learnt to indulge in them?’”

“‘I can doubt neither the power nor the goodness of God,’ she answered. ‘I can only think of her own unworthiness, and, I fear, presumption, in asking for a miracle to be wrought in our favor; and I much fear that Marie, when no longer infirm, may lose her habits of devotion. In the midst of my toil I think of heaven, where I hope to go with my grandchild; and then all the troubles of this life appear as nothing compared with the glorious hope of the future. If I have lost my son and daughter, I know that I shall find them again; and this thought supported me to bear their departure. If you tell me that I am old, and Marie has not been well a single hour since she was born, and that we must bear with many privations, I only say, a little patience, and we shall both soon be in the world where there is neither pain nor want. My darling's infirmity cost me at first bitter tears, but I have since discovered that this very infirmity drew her more closely to me, disposed her to more holy and Christian thoughts than we meet with in children free to do as they will with their young limbs; and I have often thought that, instead of wishing it otherwise, I ought rather to thank our good God for my paralysed child. In my mind, it is best for us poor blind creatures to pray to Him who sees and knows all—to do as He wills, not as we would wish.’”

“She was here interrupted by the return of her grandchild. She entered joyfully, and seating herself on Neptune's back, patted his great head. The dog rose gently, and carried her across the room, barking with delight. Marie threw to some distance one of the crutches, and then leaving her seat on Neptune, instead of supporting herself by the table and the wall, as she had always been forced to do, with the help of one crutch alone she succeeded in reaching the other, which by this time Neptune had got in his mouth. The grandmother made a gesture of astonishment. Marie then seated herself by the fire, without making any remark upon her having, for the first time in her life, walked with only one crutch. Before leaving, I pressed Mrs. Lemaire's hands between mine.

“‘I will return to-morrow,’ I said, ‘and every day until the first Communion is made.’”

“My heart beat so quick! I cannot describe to you the emotion I felt.

“The next day, and the next, the same scene took place, and I could no longer contain myself.

“‘Dear Marie,’ said I, ‘I know all! Let us try if you cannot walk down the street with one crutch. I will be close at hand, in case you should need assistance.’”

“‘I will go to the church,’ said the child, with extraordinary firmness. ‘To-morrow I shall not want even one crutch.’”

“‘We shall see,’ said the grandmother, pale with anxiety; and I echoed her words—‘We shall see! we shall see!’”

"The trial then began. Marie went on in front, and I followed with the grandmother. I do not know whether those we met were surprised to see me walking with the poor old woman, but their looks troubled me little—I was too deeply interested to regard them. I saw nothing but the child walking before us, and every now and then turning her head, with a triumphant smile on her lips. We reached the church in safety, and all went to kneel at the altar of our Lady, Help of Christians. How earnestly I prayed!

"The grandmother, with her forehead on the pavement, was sobbing bitterly.

"The long looked for day was the next. The ceremony was to take place in the parish church, which was much farther off than the church of the convent which Mrs. Lemaire and Marie generally frequented; but notwithstanding the greater distance she had to walk, all happened as the child had predicted. She had no other support but her grandmother's arm, either in going or returning. The neighbors, from their windows, watched her with friendly interest and the most lively expressions of sympathy and pleasure. Neptune alone appeared anxious and uneasy at seeing his little mistress depart without the supports he believed essential to her. He seized the edge of Mrs. Lemaire's best gown, and endeavored to drag her back to the cottage, and making a hundred circles round Marie, seemed to try to remind her of what she had forgotten. Finally, the prudent Neptune was obliged to be locked up. As for me, I scarcely knew what I did for joy; and so great was my confidence, that the evening before I had written home a long account of the events of the last few days, of which I had been a witness.

"The child returned, after hearing a Mass of thanksgiving, so much fatigued, that she went to bed. A good night took away all feeling of weariness; but when she set off for school the next morning, she found it impossible to advance, even a few yards, without the help of one crutch at least. For three days this assistance was sufficient, and she then became weaker, and in much the same state as she had always been, until the last fortnight, and the other crutch was resumed. Marie wept almost without ceasing; her grandmother was not less afflicted; but her chief trouble was her fear lest the child's faith and confidence should be shaken by this sad termination to her hopes.

"I had just received an appointment as surgeon on board a vessel, and I was preparing for my first voyage, which was expected to last fourteen months. Mrs. Lemaire acknowledged to me that she could not speak to Marie upon her feelings, the state of which she so much desired to know; and, yielding to her importunities, I promised to try to fathom the depths of the child's innocent heart. This commission was most distressing to me. I have seen men who thought themselves the wisest of moralists, models of firmness and courage, because they bore with exemplary fortitude the misfortunes of their neighbors, so long as they suffered not by them; but this is not my nature, and I cannot help participating largely in the griefs of those I know and love. It was, then, with much pain, after giving the child a pretty agate rosary my sister had sent her, that I seated myself opposite to her by the fire. One of her little crutches was under her arm, and the other lying at her feet; and as I cast my eyes on it, they filled with tears.

"Not knowing how better to begin, I plunged at once into the subject.

"*'Marie,'* said I, *'have you prayed to our Lady, Help of Christians, since your Mass of thanksgiving?'*

"The child rested her head on her knees, and her sobs for some time prevented her from answering. I could not restrain my own tears, and they fell fast on her thin little hand, which I held in mine. Poor Marie saw my grief, and recovered herself sooner than I could.

"*'To-day I have wept for the last time; for I will not again grieve my dear grandmother nor you.'*

"*'The way not to grieve us,'* I replied, *'is to pray constantly to our Blessed Lady with great fervor and confidence, and never to murmur against God's holy will.'*

"I was going on, but stopped short before the earnest look of the paralysed child.

"*'I murmur!'* she cried. *'I pray with less confidence! Oh no! never will I act thus, though I have committed a great fault.'*

"The child cast down her eyes, and a bright blush came over her sweet face, as I gently interrogated her.

"*'Before my cure,'* said she, *'and while I was praying to the Holy Virgin to help me, I felt my heart all on fire. I was cured! Well, and then I returned thanks to her at the altar in the convent chapel. I was much distressed, and could not pray as I used to. Even while kneeling before her image, I was thinking, not of the goodness God had shown to me, but of going to the little island where I first saw you without the help of Neptune; and then I fancied myself in the little playground at school, running with the other girls, and playing at battle dore, instead of sitting alone in a corner. I was so happy that I forgot to be grateful. But our good God saw all. He knew that I should not give Him my heart if I recovered, so He sent back my infirmity, that I might be wholly His.'*

"I have preserved the exact sense of this explanation, so admirable in its Christian humility; but I regret that I cannot give it to you in Marie's own simple words. Was she right in her conjecture? We read in the Gospel, that of the ten lepers cleansed, nine departed without one word of gratitude and thanksgiving for the great benefit they had just received; but we are not told that the disease fell again on these men, in punishment for their neglect. Mrs. Lemaire had charged me to reprimand, if necessary, the dear, infirm child; and I, instead, had received from her a lesson of confidence and filial submission to our Lord's will, which I hope never to forget. When I told the grandmother of what had passed, she seemed relieved of a great burthen. For this old woman no misfortune was without its consolations, so full was her heart with the idea of the eternal justice of God.

"I was obliged next day to sail; and as I knew no one to correspond with in the town, a year passed without my hearing any news of my two friends. The recollection of their poor dwelling, and of the little island, came to me, however, as often as that of my old home, where my grandfather and sister were expecting me. When I purchased, at the ports we stopped at, little articles of the manufacture of different countries, I never forgot to set something aside for Marie; and I already fancied I heard her expressions of pleasure and gratitude, while the ship was entering the harbor, and I saw the familiar lighthouse on the cliff, at the foot of which stood the convent chapel and Mrs. Lemaire's cottage.

"I waited until evening before visiting them, for I had quite a large package of presents to carry. On drawing near, I saw a light in the well-known window, and I hastened on, full of pleasure and expectation. A dog was scratching at the closed door and howling; and I was astonished to find that poor Neptune was shut out and neglected. A sudden fear came over me; when the dog recognized me, and changed his howling into a low moan, like the sobbings of a child. I opened the door, and he crept in with me. Nobody was there but two aged women: one was sitting by the bed, reading with difficulty a chapter of the Imitation to her dying friend.

"Mrs. Lemaire raised herself at the sound of my voice, and fixed on me a look full of affection.

"*'Marie is gone first,'* said she—*'a few days ago; in nursing her I took her sickness, and before to-morrow night I shall have rejoined my darling. If our child had been cured by a miracle, as we once thought she was,—if she were still living, what anxiety it would give me to have to leave her exposed to all the snares and perils of the world. Old as I was, I could not have expected to be able to protect her long. But what does our dear Lord do? Instead of granting us a grace full of danger, He calls the child to Himself, to crown her with His benefits, and to keep her safe with Himself forever. He even shortens her separation from me, whom she loved so well. Last night she came to summon me hence, and I felt her little hand pass across my forehead. There seemed to be a ray of*

sunshine all around me, and a sweet odor filled the poor room."

"The neighbor who was watching by Mrs. Lemaire's bedside, and who had stopped in her reading on my entrance, now beckoned me mysteriously to the hearth.

"It will be to-night," said she. "The death-watch is in the chimney; do you not hear it sound?"

"I hesitated, and heard distinctly the voice of a small bird, who at regular intervals uttered a little cry, very melancholy and sweet.

"You think it is the death-watch," said she; "but to me it is my darling's voice, telling me of the goodness and glory of God, and begging me to stay no longer here. Oh! it is indeed no bird—it is Marie. You know how often I used to call her my little dove!"

"There was nothing dreary or painful about this death-bed: all that we saw was a tranquil farewell to the troubles of this earth, and a foretaste of celestial joys, and a song of thanksgiving for trials patiently endured, and for promised happiness. Mrs. Lemaire died the following morning, just at dawn. I followed her coffin to the cemetery, amid a crowd of poor neighbors, whom she had so often succored, and who formed a deeply afflicted yet orderly little procession.

"I have now finished my story of Marie and her grandmother; and I can assure you when, unhappily, I sometimes hear men declaim against Providence, I always recollect, that a poor old market woman and her paralytic grandchild found no grounds for crying out against the judgments and mercy of

God. In my hours of weariness and discouragement,—for all professions are liable to these occasionally,—the example of this old woman and child is most precious to me. If a temptation seems difficult to overcome, or if I have to deplore a fall, I repeat to myself the words of Marie, when she had given up all hope of a cure; and before inurmuring against Heaven, let all examine themselves well, to see what their gratitude has been for acknowledged graces."

Valentine having finished his story, I said:—

"However true your story may be, it will find many incredulous, that such virtue and elevating thoughts have been found in the poor cottage, and from the lips of its poverty-stricken inhabitants. However, will you allow me to write down for my friends the history of Mrs. Lemaire and her grandchild?"

"You may write for generous souls, for sincere Christians," said Valentine, "who are to be found in all ranks of society; for those who remember that the Mother of God could not afford a lamb for the ransom of her Divine Son, that the Apostles were laborers and fishermen, and that many a saint has been engaged in hard work to earn his daily bread. What says the sacred Scriptures, in the eleventh chapter of Ecclesiasticks: 'The wisdom of the humble shall exalt his head, and shall make him sit in the midst of great men. Praise not a man for his beauty; neither despise a man for his lowly rank. The bee is small among flying things: but her fruit hath the chiefest sweetness.'"

The Story of a Pair of Boots.

AN alms given with discretion is like a bill of exchange drawn upon heaven, and which is never protested. It is often, indeed, paid before the time, and usually with large interest. The hero of the present story will furnish us with an example.

There was once, in the year 1848, in the military hospital of a large town, which some reasons prevent my naming, a soldier called François, belonging to the — (the same reasons oblige me to be silent as to the number of the artillery regiment which was then garrisoned in that town). François, a native of a little village of Alsace, in the department of the Bas-Rhin, was lying sick in the hospital. The doctor who attended him maintained that the extreme pleasure he felt at the idea of returning to his village (for François had obtained his dismissal) was the cause of the serious attack with which he had been seized. Excess in anything is a fault. Be that as it may, François was as good a Christian as he was a brave soldier. During the seven years he had passed in his regiment he had never been seriously reprimanded but once; and that was for having given a sabre thrust to one of his comrades for speaking irreverently of sacred things. As for himself, he had long thought this blow, given in so good a cause, acceptable to God.

The evening before his departure, when François, now almost convalescent, was preparing to quit the hospital and return home, he perceived in one of the long corridors a stranger—a tall, robust young man, who, from fatigue in travelling, had been obliged to remain some days in the hospital. This stranger, named Thomassin, also intended leaving on the morrow, and his departure was at that moment the subject of conversation with the chaplain.

"Monsieur l'Abbé," said he to the priest, "I have recovered my health in this house; complete the work of mercy by giving me a pair of shoes, for the rough roads have worn mine out. These shoes, which you may be good enough to give or obtain for me, will, perhaps, conduct me on the road to fortune."

"I will willingly give you those that I wore in the confessional in the winter, to keep me from the cold," answered the abbé; "but they will not go on your feet; you are bigger than I am. But I will see—I will fetch them."

"Do not go, Monsieur l'Abbé!" cried François, approaching the speakers; "I have found what you want."

"Where?"

"In my bag."

"But do not you need them yourself?"

"I only want one pair, and I have two. It is true, they are boots; and if Monsieur, whose foot seems about my size, will permit me to offer them, they are now at his service."

The traveller willingly accepted so kind an offer; and, giving his name to the generous soldier, he asked for his, and that of his country and his village, saying, "Who gives to the poor lends to God."

"Which our Heavenly Father will return a hundredfold," said the abbé.

Early on the morrow the stranger and François, each with their bags at their back, sticks in their hands, and in complete travelling costume, met accidentally in the chapel of the hospital. Both were good Christians; and both, on the point of commencing a long journey, wished to put themselves under the protection of Him whose powerful hand could preserve them from danger.

Whilst François—his heart joyous and his purse light—journeys on, singing one of the songs of his childhood, let us follow the young traveller who is sadly leaving his country to push his fortune among the gold mines of California. The joyous child of Languedoc, Thomassin, still young, had lost, with the last member of his family, the modest heritage his dying father had left him. Carefully taught, by the care of the old curé of his village, the first elements of a religious education, he had learnt later at school the art of drawing, by which he would be aided in gaining an honest livelihood. Thomassin might have been an artist, if he had not been dazzled by the golden dreams which pointed to California as a land of promise. Behold him, then, launched on the road of enterprise, sad withal, but strong in health, well clothed, and above all, well shod.

One of his countrymen, a friend of his childhood, was mate in a ship at Havre ready to sail for the Californian *El Dorado*, and in this he purposed to embark. From the town where he

was to Havre, it was more than a hundred leagues; and a hundred leagues seemed a long way to the poor traveller, who, with slender purse, had no carriage but his legs at his disposal. Thomassin, nothing frightened by so great a distance, marched bravely on, eating one day the piece of bread economized from the last, and moistening it with water from a brook; receiving at night a hospitality paid for the next morning by a rude drawing representing the portrait or caricature, as it happened, of the landlady. Travelling in this manner for fifteen days, our courageous youth arrived at Havre the evening before the vessel sailed. His friend received him cordially, and soon installed him as assistant in the cook's department. On the morrow they set sail, favored by a fine breeze; and Thomassin, standing on deck, piously uncovered his head before the cross of Notre Dame de Grâce,—the modest chapel, so dear to the mariner, that crowns the wooded hills of Honfleur. His eyes full of tears, but his heart beating hopefully, he now addressed a last adieu to the shores of France.

II.

Let us pass over the incidents of a long voyage—the squalls, the tempests, the dangers, and the grumbling of the ship's cook at his assistant;—let us pass over all that, and introduce our voyagers to the harbor where they arrived in the early part of September, 1848. Thomassin, strong vigorous and gifted with great courage and energy, soon set to work, and his undertakings, blessed by God, whom he never ceased to invoke night and morning, were crowned with success. Prudent, economical, avoiding the seductions which smiled on his path, and renouncing those pleasures on which so many of his unhappy companions made shipwreck, he saw himself, at the end of fifteen months, the possessor of a considerable sum realized in gold. He was, in fact, a rich man.

Thomassin, after offering fervent thanks to Him who had blessed his labors, set out on his return to France. While he voyages under the mild rays of the star propitious to mariners—the *stella matutina*—let us return to the other traveler, whom we left singing on the road to Alsace.

III.

Happier than his companion at the hospital, François, the artillery-man, had returned to his village, his old father, and his affectionate mother. But three days before his arrival the paternal house had been devoured by flames, and his family at that moment were completely ruined. This sad event mingled a few bitter tears with those he shed on embracing his old parents; but strong in adversity, with the strength that comes from above, he found at the bottom of his heart words of hope and consolation.

"Re-assure yourselves," said he to the members of his family who were assembled around him; "God will not abandon you. Let us fervently pray to Him, and our house will be raised from its ashes; the hail will spare our harvest, and the sun will fertilize our vines. You will see."

Meantime, God sent to console him one of those sweet angels—a young and pious girl, whom he had called in former days his little sister, but was now to call his wife.

The first care of Marianne—now Madame François—was to raise from its ruins, with the money of her marriage portion, the desolate house of her new parents; and as the hail spared the harvests, whilst the sun fertilized the vines, the family had hopes of being again well off. They had not, indeed, twenty crowns; but they had paid all their debts, and Madame François had just given her husband a charming little girl, as pretty as her mother. She was to be baptized on Saturday morning, and called Marie in honor of the god-mother, François' young sister, and Joséphine in honor of the godfather, an old comrade of the child's father—an excellent man, lately retired from service in a neighboring village.

The god-father was to come on Friday to pass the night at the parents' house to be introduced to his god-daughter, and to be all ready for the time of the christening. Eight o'clock

had struck on the village clock, and the brigadier had not yet arrived. The night was dark; the north wind blew amongst the large trees of the neighboring forest; and at intervals rain, mixed with hail, dashed against the windows of the house, where the happy family waited with an impatience, now amounting to uneasiness, as the church clock struck nine. François could not keep quiet; he beat time with his fingers on the lattice panes. His wife, seated in a large arm-chair, whose yellow stuff probably dated as far back as the reign of good King Dagobert, was devoutly reading a book of prayers. The grandfather, an old grenadier, was in the corner cleaning his gun; the old grandmother, on her side, was washing the face of the child, and covering it with kisses, saying, "Poor little angel! how it resembles its father!" All new-born babes resemble their father—that every one knows. Marie, the young sister of François, was contemplating with emotion the colored portrait of a dragoon, in full uniform, framed in walnut-wood.

"Decidedly Simon will not come this evening," said François, suddenly breaking the silence which for some moments had reigned in the room where the family were assembled; "the rain increases, the roads are frightful, and the sky black as an ink bottle. Let us go to bed."

"Yes, but it will soon be ten."

"Let us wait till then."

At that instant a bright flash of lightning lit up the sky, and peals of thunder shook the house. The three women crossed themselves.

"Come, let us go to bed," repeated François, "it has struck ten—Simon will not come;" and, wishing his mother and father good-night, he was preparing to retire, when, all of a sudden, the gallop of a horse was heard in the distance.

"It is Simon's horse," said the old man, "I recognize his pace."

"More rapid than usual, because he is late."

The noise, approaching nearer and nearer, soon stopped at the door. François hastened to open it, and cried out, "It is not he!"

Instead of Simon, it was a tall stranger, wrapped in a large blue mantle, his face encased in a thick black beard, and his head covered with a glazed hat.

"It is not he; that is true," said the stranger; "but it is his representative. I am charged with this letter for you."

"In that case you are welcome," replied François. "Pray alight and enter the house."

While the old man conducted Simon's horse to the stable, François rapidly read the letter, which was as follows:

"MY GOOD OLD COMRADE:—Pardon me if important reasons, that you will soon know, prevent my naming your child, and as it is necessary to have a godfather for your daughter, I send another, also called Joseph, so that you will not have to change an iota of the names you agreed on. In this manner the little one and everybody will gain by it; I alone shall lose the pleasure I promised myself in accepting one title more to your friendship.

Adieu, my old friend,

Always yours,

SIMON."

"Marianne," cried François after attentively reading this note, "Offer Monsieur something to drink;—the best, you understand." Then approaching the stranger, he took him by the hand, saying, "Once more welcome, since you come on the part of my old fellow comrade; and pardon me if the hospitality we poor peasants have to offer is not worthy of you." "Make yourself easy," answered the stranger; "I am not of high birth like yourself; I am the son of a simple husbandman, whose name to-day I am as proud to bear as I shall be to-morrow to give mine to your beloved child."

At eleven o'clock, the representative of brigadier Simon, well dried externally, by a large wood fire which had been re-lit on the hearth, and warmed internally by the contents of an old bottle of wine, asked permission to retire.

"Do as if you were at home," said François; and exchanged

ing a second shake of the hand he conducted him to the chamber prepared for his friend Simon.

IV.

On the morrow, the storm had completely ceased; the sky was magnificent; not a cloud was to be seen; the countenance of the stranger, reflecting the happiness which illumined that of his new friends, was also serene. All was joy in the little village of —; the church had the appearance of a fête; and the bell sent forth its joyous notes. The baptism took place at ten, and was immediately followed by a repast, which, to the friends of the family, is always indispensable. M. le Curé, seated in the place of honor, presided on the occasion with much gaiety; the scene was an animated one; the well stocked cellar was not spared; happiness in a village is never miserly; the heart, they say, is always in the hand. François, whose fine voice every Sunday at the chorister's desk made the school-master, who was director in chief of the music, envious, was asked for a song.

At first he begged to be excused, at last he said, "I will give you a little romance, that a comrade, who was ill from a fall, taught me in the hospital of —"; and in a loud voice he sang one of those beautiful chansons of M. de Ségur.

The stranger, being invited in his turn, excused himself, saying he had no voice. "However," added he, "as I ought to pay my reckoning I will relate, if you like, between the fruit and the cheese a true history." As soon as the dessert had been placed on a tablecloth of snowy whiteness, Simon's representative spoke as follows:—

"My story commences nearly two years and a half ago. A poor traveler coming from a distance, exhausted by fatigue, and emaciated by hunger, not having a sou in his pocket or a sole to his foot, was obliged to stop at the hospital of the town of —. As he was young and healthy, some days rest soon set him up again. He wished to continue his journey; but during his illness his purse had not re-filled, nor his shoes been re-soled; the road that he had to travel was long. What should he do? Should he leave it all to God? Yes, that's what the poor traveler did, and the blessing of God came to his aid and sent him one fine morning a pair of new boots. A brave soldier who was about to quit the hospital at the same time, to return home, was on this occasion the instrument of God's mercy. This man, named François, is to-day the father of my god-daughter."

"But how did you learn this story?" said François, his face as red as a Montmorency cherry; "the poor traveler is dead, no doubt from want in California, where he went to seek his fortune."

"I learnt it from himself, for he has not forgotten it," said the stranger.

"Is he still alive?"

"He is, and what is more is rich, for he found the fortune he went to seek."

"Where is he at this moment?"

"In your arms!" cried the stranger, pressing to his bosom him, whom he called his first benefactor.

The sensation produced by this affecting scene can be better understood than expressed.

"And this is why," said a new comer entering the festive chamber; "this is why the ex-brigadier Simon yielded his rights to your friend. Do you understand me now, old comrade?"

"You are come too late, Simon," said François, extending his hand to his old companion-in-arms.

"It is never too late," said Simon, "when we arrive in time to witness the happiness of our friends; and while there remains a glass of wine on the table to drink their health."

V.

"My history is not finished," resumed the rich stranger. "The last words I pronounced on taking leave of the generous François were these: 'Who gives to the poor, lends to God;' and the chaplain of the hospital added: 'Which our good God will repay a hundredfold,' and He has sent me to-day, my dear François, to pay His debts. Saying this, he took out of his portfolio a packet of bank notes, which he divided in the following manner:—"

"Twenty notes of a thousand francs for François; twenty notes of a thousand francs for Madame François; and twenty notes of a thousand francs for my god-daughter."

The worthy people would have refused this recompense from their grateful friend, if the curé had not forced them to accept what he called the debt of the good God.

At that moment the village postman brought a letter to Mademoiselle Marie; it was dated from Rome. By turns pale and red with emotion, she hurriedly perused it; and uttering a joyful cry announced to the company that André, the cavalier of the 11th dragoons, had quitted Rome, and embarked at Civita Vecchia, to return home for good.

"Bravo my children!" said the curé; "all is indeed happiness to-day," and he added, whispering to Marie, "when shall the wedding be?"

"Ask my mother," said she, blushing like a rose in May.

"In a month," answered the good old woman.

"And I will pay the violins," said the rich stranger, throwing on the table twelve bank notes.

"If you go on in this manner," said François, "you will keep nothing for yourself."

"But the most precious treasure of all, look—" and opening with a small gold key suspended from his neck, a box of ebony, richly inlaid with mother of pearl and ivory, he took out a pair of old boots; "This," said he, "is the foundation of all; with these boots, I have made my fortune."

The following year, about the same day, brigadier Simon presented at the baptismal font of the little church of — a fine boy, the son of Madame François, and whom his god-father promised to teach the military exercise when he was six years old.

François, the best of sons, the happiest of husbands, and the most tender father, is now mayor of his commune. Whenever he meets a beggar on the road, he never fails to give him charity, and murmur in a low voice these words:

"Who gives to the poor lends to the Lord."

The Story of a Watch.

THE sad events which changed the destinies of France, destroyed many a larger fortune than that of the hero of this story; but it could not have reduced to destitution a more deserving family. At the time that Captain Gerbaut held an honorable rank in the army, Madame, his wife, kept the post-office in a provincial town. He was dismissed, and his wife lost her office. Whilst the fallen captain was uselessly seeking some humble employment, his family, in the meantime,

economised as much as possible. More than a year had passed, and their resources were nearly exhausted. Gerbaut, overwhelmed by these misfortunes, and discouraged by want of success, fell ill; he would have died, had not his wife, with the courage of despair, devoted her days and nights to work as laborious as it was unprofitable. It was piteous to see such a feeble creature oppressed with so many cares, fatigues, and anxieties. Gerbaut suffered all the tortures of a sensitive

mind, and only supported the burden of life in the hope of sustaining his poor companion, and finding means to provide for his family's subsistence.

Madame Gerbaut did all she could to hide their poverty from the eyes of the world. She imposed upon herself the most cruel privations to keep up a decent appearance. This was less from shame at an honorable poverty, than from personal dignity, and a desire not to afflict her husband and herself with the harrowing spectacle of their deep distress. Madame Gerbaut thought, too, and perhaps with reason, that pity is not a promoter of success, and that the more their misery was known, the less chance her husband would have of obtaining employment. Their dwelling, therefore, was modest rather than poor; a scrupulous attendance to neatness and order excluded the idea of extreme misery.

Though the captain was no longer young, he courageously resolved to undertake anything that came in his way. As he wrote a good hand, and was an excellent accountant, he occasionally obtained manuscripts to copy, or accounts to make up; but these resources were very uncertain. Nevertheless, this work raised some hope in his heart. He returned happy to his dwelling, when he brought the means of procuring his companion some days of repose. The children also had their fêtes, more delightful because they were so rare. With what happiness the poor father saw them jump and shout joyously around him! How affected he was in contemplating their little happy faces, when he could say on entering, "Julie, Aglaé, I have met with something good." Then he displayed to their charmed gaze beautiful fruit, pretty cakes, and sparkling bonbons; round which they merrily danced before eating.

But soon the future began to show itself under a more severe aspect, to these young daughters of Captain Gerbaut; they grew up and began to work, aiding their mother in making tapestry for the manufactory which furnished her with employment. All three carefully repaired the linen and clothes which still remained with them. Sad as was this occupation, it employed them, and gave them the satisfaction of having performed a duty. The captain was the most unhappy. His wife, knowing how accustomed he was to an active life, saw him with distress becoming a prey to inaction, and despair amounting almost to rage, at the idea of being not only useless, but a charge to his family. Every day she invented a new pretext for his leaving home; and to distract his thoughts, urged the necessity of some plan, some visits, giving him often a hope which she had not herself. But this man, so brave before the enemy, showed a want of courage in exposing himself to refusal or humiliation; he could not proclaim his poverty, and would solicit with too much delicacy and discretion to succeed; he was too proud to be importunate. Thus, he had kept up a friendship with some of his old companions in arms, particularly with a general, who was indebted to the empire for a splendid fortune. A cover was always laid for the captain, at his abundant table. On that day Madame Gerbaut assisted at her husband's poor toilet. The reverses of fortune were not then felt. The children were more joyful than usual when they saw their father thus apparelled, and all believed themselves less miserable.

However, each day made these miracles of economy more difficult. One Thursday, (it was the captain's fête day) Madame Gerbaut saw with inexpressible grief that the old black coat, so religiously preserved for great occasions, would soon refuse to serve its master. It would then be impossible to present himself at the house of the general. This little circumstance, which recalled a long series of misfortunes, the term of which it would be impossible to foresee, quite overcame the courageous wife. She could not avoid weeping, as she repaired the button-holes and decorations of this coat, the witness of better days and sweeter hopes. She endeavored to smarten it up with a little ribbon which had many times served the same purpose. At length the captain departed, and reached the abode of his entertainer.

The general always remembered that he been a soldier, and was not the man to measure his consideration by the value of a

coat; he had, besides, a real esteem for Captain Gerbaut, whose honorable character was appreciated by all the officers of his corps. The general's party on this day consisted of a dozen choice companions. During dinner the conversation turned on industrial improvement. French activity had then begun to impart to the arts of peace some of the ardor it had lavished for fifteen years on the field of battle throughout Europe.

The general happened to have a valuable piece of mechanism. It was a very curious watch, of great price, on account of the multiplicity of its delicate wheelwork, and the subdivisions of time indicated on its several faces. The bijou was passed in turn to each of the guests; the conversation then changed, and after discussion on other topics, they returned to the drawing-room.

On entering, the general remembered his watch, and, ringing for his valet, ordered him to take it from the table where it was left, and place it in safety. After a few moments the man returned, quite frightened; he had not been able to find the watch. The general, much surprised, went with Baptiste to the dining-room, but was not more fortunate.

"Some one, M. le général, may perhaps have brought it by mistake to the drawing-room," said Baptiste.

"I do not think so; but it is easy to ascertain.

A new search was made, but with no better success.

"What I fear," said the general, "is that, through some carelessness, the watch may be injured or broken."

"We will not leave this room till it is found," said one of the guests in a serious tone.

"This decision is not fair," laughingly answered a young man who, perhaps, had some other engagement for the evening; "it seems to me somewhat hard on the general's part, and that it rather trespasses on our liberty. I propose a more certain and expeditious measure;—to let ourselves be searched."

A loud shout followed this proposition.

"Agreed! agreed!" they all cried; and the young man, giving himself up the first, insisted that the valet, in his office of *douanier*, should make a strict examination of his pockets.

The general, who at first opposed this pleasantry, ended by laughing at it. Each new search furnished fresh subject for amusement. The captain took little part in these jokes; he joined in them with a constrained and melancholy air, and kept himself in the background as much as possible, without being remarked. As the search proceeded, he seemed more disturbed; one would have thought he wished to elude his turn; and perhaps he flattered himself he would be able to do so, in the midst of this noise and confusion; but it was not to be so. On the contrary, after all his companions had submitted to this ordeal, they turned towards him with redoubled clamor, jokingly signalling him as the culprit, since he came last.

The captain, pale and uneasy, stammered forth some excuses, which were lost in the noise. They urged Baptiste to stricter severity in this last examination.

"Baptiste, this is the decisive moment!" cried one. "Baptiste, be on your guard—we have our eyes on you!" said another. "Expose the criminal. Courage, Baptiste, the last chance is the best!"

The valet advanced; but Gerbaut, crossing his arms on his chest, declared with trembling voice, that unless by violence, no man should lay hands on him.

A profound silence succeeded this declaration, when the general advanced, saying, "The captain is right; this childish play has lasted too long. I demand an exemption both for him and myself."

Gerbaut, unable to speak, scarcely to support himself, thanked his friend by a grateful look, and left the room to conceal the shame and embarrassment of his position.

The general, after his departure, made no further remark, and the guests imitated his reserve; but every face expressed curiosity, and their host himself seemed uneasy and thoughtful. Gerbaut walked some distance before returning home;

he wished to be alone, and to calm the agitated feelings to which he was a prey. His mind was confused, and it was with great difficulty he could arrange his ideas and form at last some decided resolution. It was late when he returned home, and his wife, who was eagerly expecting him, could scarcely restrain a cry of alarm on seeing her husband enter pale and disordered.

"What has happened?" she exclaimed.

"Nothing, nothing," said Gerbaut, sinking upon a chair, exhausted with fatigue and emotion, and placing on the table a little parcel. "This has cost me very dear," he added.

In vain Madame Gerbaut, seeking to calm him, wished to know the particulars.

"To-morrow," answered he; "to-morrow we shall see; I will go out early. Leave me, and rest easy; to-morrow I will tell you all."

In the morning the captain took the road to the hotel where he had dined the evening before; and though he walked resolutely forward, an inexpressible sorrow agitated his poor mind. How should he present himself? How would he be received? Should he go alone? Would it be better to write? What might it not cost him to confess? It seemed impossible to support the weight which almost crushed him. He tried a hundred different ways of commencing his terrible confession. With what words should he accost the general, to prevent an accent, a look, that could never be pardoned or forgotten? The reception from the valet de chambre he cared nothing for; with him all explanation was impossible. Gerbaut was nearly mad when he arrived. It was not Baptiste he met, but another domestic, who went forward to announce him. He knows nothing, he thought. What anguish! Will the general receive me? Yes. He is ushered in. Gerbaut dared not raise his eyes. He assures himself that the door is closed; then, without hesitating, in a deep and rapid voice, like a man who is accomplishing a cruel sacrifice, he began:

"I cannot deceive myself, general," he said; "I well know how strange was my conduct yesterday evening, and the suspicions to which it gave birth; I can no longer support the idea, and cost me what it may, I am come to confess to you the extent of my misfortunes, and the humiliation to which I am reduced."

The general, who at first endeavored to interrupt, now let him proceed; and Gerbaut, becoming by degrees more excited,

continued: "My misery is at its height; there lies all my excuse. I am a burden to those whom I ought to support. A wife, an indefatigable mother, can scarcely, by incessant labor, obtain daily bread for our poor children. I only partake, with shuddering, of this bread of affliction."

"Captain!" interrupted the general, quite overcome.

But Gerbaut heard and saw nothing; if he had ceased he could not have finished, perhaps, and the most painful part still remained to be told. Hurried on by despair, he continued: "I reproached myself for having partaken of a better repast than those who share my cruel destiny. Seated at your table, where this heartrending picture pursued me, I yielded to the irresistible desire of carrying to my poor children some portions of what was offered me. That was my position yesterday evening, and I should have died of shame if your guests and household had been witnesses of the abasement to which poverty had caused me to descend; but in *your* eyes, general, I could not rest with the suspicion—" Gerbaut's voice faltered, and he spoke with less volubility. The general answered:

"Thirty honorable years, my excellent friend, have placed you above all suspicion. That answers for everything;" and he showed to the astonished eyes of Gerbaut the missing watch.

"It is for me to ask your pardon," continued the general. "I had, without thinking, placed it in my pocket, where I found it in the evening, in presence of the amazed Baptiste."

"If I had but known," murmured Gerbaut, petrified.

"Regret nothing you have said," answered the general, extending his hand to his friend; "I have now learnt what you ought never to have hidden from me; and it is fortunate that the fear of a disgraceful supposition has urged you to make known the misery you are enduring. It is a friend who has listened to you; you shall soon hear from me again."

Gerbaut went home less agitated, but still all in confusion. Some days after this incident, he received another invitation to dine at the general's table. The guests were those of the last visit. The veteran did not fail to relate his inexcusable absence of mind with regard to the watch; and the captain, placed near him at table, found in the folds of his napkin, a nomination to an honorable and easy post, which would henceforth secure to himself and his family, the means of a comfortable existence.

Brother Joseph.

SAINT SIMON, in his *Memoirs*, mentions a M. Du Casse, commander of a vessel, vice-admiral, and at last lieutenant-general, who died at a very advanced age, much respected by the whole court, in 1715, the same year in which the death of Louis XIV. took place. The brave officer having amassed a large fortune during his promotion to these several grades, was enabled to render good service to the King of Spain, both with his sword and with considerable sums of money, for which he obtained the Collar of the Golden Fleece, "*an honor which was scarcely ever awarded*," adds Saint Simon, "*to persons of his condition*." Du Casse was the son of a dealer in hams, at Bayonne, and the history of the rise of this individual, carefully preserved in the family traditions, lacks neither interest nor instruction.

The father of Du Casse, a citizen of the town of Bayonne, was left a widower with two little sons, Joseph and Bruno. The latter, who afterwards became the sailor, was three years older than Joseph, and had consequently experienced more keenly the evil effects of the neglect of discipline, which had arisen from the old shop-keeper being entirely immersed in the affairs of his business. Among the inhabitants of this country there was a great liking for the naval service, and the town of Bayonne was full of that disorder and commotion which always

follows in the train of sailors and soldiers. Bruno, who was left completely to himself, was forever running about the streets, and frequenting the taverns, under the pretext of transacting his father's business. At length old Du Casse opened his eyes to what was going on; but it was too late—the twig was bent; and remonstrances, reproaches, and even punishments, were alike vain.

There was but one human being for whom Bruno appeared to entertain any feeling of consideration, and that was his little brother Joseph. Being older and stronger, and more courageous than he, it often fell out that he was called upon to defend him against children of his own age, and most nobly did he acquit himself of this duty. This species of protection cemented their natural affection. It must be admitted that nothing could exceed the sweetness, and gentleness, and beauty of poor little Joseph. He was so thin, so fragile, so timid; he had such lovely golden hair, curling all over his head, that no one could see him without feeling an interest in him, and of this his brother was very proud.

But with what loving tenderness did not little Joseph repay his brother's care of him! When Bruno was driven home constantly with harsh and angry reproaches, followed up by a severe thrashing, the poor child sat crying in a corner; and, un-

fortunately, this at length became of daily occurrence.

Du Casse was alarmed at the bad turn his son had taken, and like many other fathers in his walk of life, could think of no other method to reclaim him than a harsh severity. Whenever Bruno was sent to his garret, as a punishment, without any supper, a meaning look would pass between the two brothers, and Joseph would adroitly manage to drop half of his portion into his pocket, and take it up to Bruno when he went to bed. But there was another less laudable feature in these children's attachment: Bruno very often took advantage of the innocence of Joseph, and of his devoted affection, to implicate him in some of his evil deeds. As he knew himself to be in his father's black-books, and that Joseph was the favorite, he trained him to accomplish many little pilfering feats, and made a complete "cat's-paw" of him; not from any treacherous motive, for they equally shared the profits arising from the transaction: Bruno merely sought to divert the channel of his father's wrath from himself, and that was all he cared about. And so it chanced that a whole string of potargos disappeared from the chimney-corner, one by one, cut away, in fact, by Master Joseph; and when, after a month, the misdemeanor was discovered, poor Bruno became the sole sufferer, and a whole shower of blows fell thick and fast upon his luckless head. They used to get up in the night to forestall their paternal inheritance, as represented by the hams in the shop; they devoured jars of gherkins, to which Joseph's tiny fingers could alone gain entrance through the narrow aperture; they treated the whole establishment as a conquered country; they levied taxes on their father's territory, and declared open war whithersoever they penetrated; they even went so far as to melt a pewter dish upon a shovel, for mere wanton amusement. Imagine to yourself, if you can, the devastation carried on by these two children, impelled as they were by ignorance and love of mischief.

Joseph, with his childish consciousness of right and wrong, would be frequently tormented with scruples; but when his brother had determined on a thing, he dared not resist him. Often the poor child had to suffer in consequence of their great inequality of strength, and often he became the victim of his brother's superior physical advantages. If they played together Joseph's blows were little more than caresses, whilst those of Bruno were wounds, from which the blood flowed, where the elder would lightly jump with his legs tied, Joseph would fall down flat on the ground. It is true that after any of these disasters, Bruno would run towards his brother, pale as death, and tearing his hair, on which poor Joseph would restrain his tears, unable to bear the sight of such passionate remorse and despair.

Old Du Casse became more and more perplexed as his sons grew older. Bruno's circle of evil acquaintances had increased; he no longer condescended to play with his younger brother, feeling it beneath his dignity to be seen amusing himself with such a child. His father had apprenticed him out two or three times, but he was always turned off in a great hurry, and thrown again on the old man's hands, who was utterly at a loss to know what to do with him.

At this juncture, an old canon, who lodged in Du Casse's house, took pity on Joseph; the good priest instructed him in Latin and in the Church chant, and gained him admission into a religious community. The child had very good natural parts; he soon showed himself to be studious, devout, and full of intelligence. But what result did all this produce between these brothers, so attached to one another?

Joseph became painfully conscious of the terrible disorders that reigned in the paternal abode, and his devoted affection for his eldest brother was an additional incentive to endeavor to arouse him by gentle remonstrances to a sense of his unworthy conduct. Bruno, however, repulsed them at first with a sort of rough brotherly bluntness. He defended himself, denied the accusation, and blamed his father. Joseph was in no way discouraged; he returned to the charge again and again, but his prayers and entreaties, as well as the most ingenious devices that his affection could suggest, proved utter-

ly unavailing. If Bruno appeared touched for a moment, he speedily betook himself to his worthless companions, and returned apparently more hardened than before. At last Joseph gave him up in despair of being of any use.

Bruno was wounded to the heart. Believing himself to be deserted and betrayed by the only being in the world who had loved and cared for him, he fell into a dull and melancholy state; and one fine day, after having frequently threatened to leave home in his fits of passion, he put his threat into execution, and finally disappeared. It must be confessed that the old man did not experience any very lively sorrow at the departure of his son, for he had long despaired of his reformation and been prepared for the worst; but Joseph's anguish was sharp and poignant, and he felt it the more, inasmuch as his tender conscience reproached him, lest the unavailing efforts he had made to reclaim his brother might have been the very means of driving him from home.

His father and he inquired everywhere, and endeavored by every possible means to gain intelligence of Bruno's movements. It was reported at last that he had enlisted as a sailor—but in what service? He had sold himself to a captain of buccaneers, and had gone to join a most desperate and daring band of those sea pirates, bound for the West India Islands.

These reports were indeed but too true. Bruno embarked with the rest of the captain's crew, who were men of pillage and slaughter, in a crazy vessel, which arrived almost miraculously at the headquarters of those men, after a voyage of four months' duration.

These pirates commanded by the most daring and able captains, were, at that period, the terror of more than half the world. They had carried devastation into Spain, and laid waste North and South America, besides other ravages, which have filled many volumes of history.

Robust, courageous, and of dauntless resolution, Bruno Du Casse had nothing to fear or to lose; and in three months he became one of the most renowned members of the band. Though but slightly skilled in the practice of arms, he, with ten others, axe in hand, captured a Spanish frigate. Burning with a desire to distinguish himself by some brilliant exploit, he one day threw himself all alone into the midst of a huge vessel, and threatened to blow it up with an incendiary shell. The terrified crew surrendered, and Bruno made a signal to his comrades to come and join him.

In two years he accumulated five hundred thousand crowns, which he invested in the various banks of Europe, and which were but the first fruits of his immense fortune. We will not follow him through all his expeditions, which had already attracted the attention of the navy of Louis XIV., and made that monarch desirous of attaching such a man to the royal service. His name was but too well known in the New World, and an enormous reward had been offered to any one who would deliver him up alive or dead. The terror he inspired was so great, that it was only equalled by the desire of capturing him. But up to this time every pursuit and attack had but turned to his greater glory.

One day a small vessel, containing only six men, bore down suddenly, close to land, upon a pirate ship, richly laden, on board of which Bruno was. They had only time to pour one broadside into the pirate sloop, but it was done so effectually that it sank to the bottom. A long boat was then launched to pick up the pirates, whom it was in contemplation to hang up to the yard-arm. Bruno endeavored to knock out the brains of the chief officer, but they hoisted him up like a shark to the deck, where he underwent a strict examination. They found some important documents in his possession, and at length he gave up his name. Two only of his crew were hung. The captain of the vessel was but too happy to have the great luck of carrying the great buccaneer chief to Europe, and he carefully confined him in the hold of the ship, with heavy irons on his hands and feet.

When in sight of the coast of Portugal, a privateer belonging to Barbary, most formidably equipped with artillery, opened an attack upon them. The Christian crew, consisting of Span-

iards and Portuguese, although greatly inferior in point of numbers, performed prodigies of valor. The disconsolate captain was prepared to die rather than yield, and the most precious part of his cargo, the object of all this bloody resistance, was the pirate, Bruno. But the cannonade of the Turks was battering the vessel to pieces; the deck was covered with the dead and the dying; all was lost; destruction seemed inevitable. The Spanish captain entered the hold where the brigand lay in chains, and offered him his liberty on condition that he would engage in defence of the vessel. "Indeed," said Bruno, "I shall have the greatest pleasure in helping you." I assure you I was getting very sick of being in the midst of all this uproar without being able to have a finger in it."

The Spaniard exacted from him a promise that he would not make his escape before they arrived in port. Bruno acceded; his chains were struck off, and the freebooter mounted the deck, sword in hand. But it was too late; the Turks had already boarded the vessel, and were crowding the decks. Bruno fought like a lion in the midst of these miscreants, and he piled up their corpses in the form of an entrenchment, behind which he resisted manfully, long after the rest of the crew were killed or taken prisoners. A moment after, and he too was carried down again to his place of confinement. "There are two of us to play at this game now," said Bruno.

The privateer reached Algiers in safety, and the captain and Bruno, who had struck up a great friendship, were sold to different masters. The pirate chief, when it came to be known who he was, fared very badly, and he suffered severely from ill-treatment and hard labor. Before a month was over he had three several times attempted to make his escape, at which the whole town was up in arms. He was wounded, recaptured, and thrown into a dungeon, heavily chained, where the bad air, the heat, and the want of food, soon reduced this strong, powerful man to the weakness of a child. The Turks regarded him as a refractory subject, and despairing of obtaining his ransom, they suffered no doctor to go near him, in hopes that death would soon put an end to his existence. But the strength of his constitution was so great, that it bore him up through a space of five months.

Just at this juncture, some Religious of the Order of Mercy for the Redemption of Captives arrived in the states of Barbary. The poor wretched prisoners were assembled together from all parts of the town of Algiers, and amongst them were the Spanish captain and the remainder of his crew. After all preparations had been made for their departure, and the ransom agreed upon they were in haste to depart; but the captain could nowhere discern amongst his unhappy companions the famous Bruno. He spoke of him at length to the good Religious, who applied to the Turks, but they appeared to know nothing of the matter, and supposed the man in question must be dead. They made further enquiry, and entered into communication with his master, who, at last, drew from a noisome dungeon, a kind of walking skeleton, whom he led shuddering to the sea-shore. Every care was lavished on this death-like object, who, however, revived with the fresh air and wholesome food, and, above all, with the hopes of liberty. The Spanish captain hastened to him, and watched beside his pillow night and day, together with the good Religious.

When Bruno had regained his health and strength, the captain proposed that he should accompany him to Spain, no longer as a prisoner, but as a partner in his gains, and offered to push him forward in the service. One day when he was talking to him on this subject, notwithstanding the prohibition of the Brother of Mercy, who was unwilling that the sick man's convalescence should be disturbed by considerations of this kind, he said :

"As you have no longer any relations, I presume that you have no inducements to return to France?"

"No relations?" said Bruno; "God only knows that."

"I thought you told me that you were unmarried, and that you were an orphan?"

"I do not remember my mother, but my father was living

when I left home, and I had a brother. But do not speak to me of that. You know what it is to be a bad son. I am a wretch—and I have probably caused the death of—"

A big tear, which he vainly strove to repress, stole down the hollow cheek of the pirate, who, overcome by these memories of the past, cried out with choking sobs, "My brother, my poor little Joseph!"

The captain, much affected, raised his head.

The Religious, who was seized with a sudden trembling, became deadly pale; he staggered for a moment, and then, rushing towards the invalid, with arms extended, he cried out :

"Bruno! Bruno! I am he!"

The two brothers remained motionless for a length of time, wrapt in a close embrace, and no sounds escaped them save stifled groans and sobs, and inarticulate words. The Spanish captain wept like a child. Meanwhile Bruno passed his hands over the face and shoulders of Joseph, without being able to give vent to his feelings otherwise than by broken accents.

"It is indeed yourself—poor child—Joseph—I cannot speak—How is all this?—How was it that I did not recognize you?—And yet I loved you, although I knew not who it was.—The heart spoke.—But you yourself?"

"I did not recognize you at first sight—you were so changed—the ravages of disease had made such fearful havoc; but your name was on our lists, and when I came to examine your features while you were sleeping—"

"What? have you known this for a whole week? Why have you so long delayed?"

"You must ask the captain, who knows to what a state you were reduced; it would have been the death of you."

"Oh, no, it would have cured me."

The two brothers again threw themselves into each other's arms, and held out their hands to grasp those of the brave Spaniard.

"But how is this," said Bruno, "what habit do you wear? You have become a monk."

"You went away to become a pirate," said Joseph, with a sweet smile; "You were liable to be taken prisoner, and it behoved me to possess the means of ransoming you."

"Oh, my dear little Joseph!" cried the other, taking him in his arms, as if he had been a child. "I must have lost my sight not to have known you. You see, captain, I come of a good stock, and that there are some very worthy people amongst my family. But make your mind easy, my little brother, your example has had a very good effect upon me. I mean now to become an honest man, and to enter the king's service."

They then spoke of their father. The good man had died a few years after Bruno's departure, upon which Joseph had embraced the religious state, where his prayers had doubtless been answered by the restoration of his brother.

When the ship set sail Bruno was perfectly restored to health, and he was able to take part in the customary procession on the return of captives, walking by the side of his brother, with a large taper in his hand: and amongst the crowd who assembled to witness the ceremony, there was scarcely an individual who did not shed tears at sight of this spectacle, when their history became known.

Bruno Du Casse, who was still in the flower of his age, did not immediately enter into the maritime service of the king. He could not yet bring his mind to present his petition to the Court of Versailles. Even his brother failed to overcome his scruples upon that point; he dreaded a refusal, and affirmed that *he had sunk so low, that it was necessary to stoop to lift him up again*. He only obtained the command of a corsair ship of war at Marseilles, and the captures she effected greatly increased his fortune, which he had nearly recovered. Three years later he was presented with a captain's commission in the king's service; he then became vice-admiral, and finally lieutenant-general, and frequented the Court, where he was specially beloved by the sovereign, and respected by all.

It is hardly necessary to add, that after he had experienced the happiness of saving his brother, Joseph made several other

voyages to the States of Barbary. He died there, indeed, of the plague, and it was not without the sweet consciousness that he had doubly ransomed his brother, for he left him leading a most pious and Christian life.

For the rest, we sum up in the words of the Duke De Saint Simon, who in speaking of Lieutenant-General Du Casse, in mentioning his death, which took place in 1715:

"Du Casse died at a very advanced age, worn out with hard service, and covered with honorable wounds. Neither the universal esteem which he had acquired, added to that of the king and his ministers, nor the great influence which his ability and

his successes in the naval service had gained for him, had been able to spoil him. He was a tall, thin man, a Commander of Saint Louis, who combined with the air of a corsair, and with considerable fire and activity, a most gentle, polished, affable demeanor; he was never known to forget himself. He was very obliging, and possessed a large share of intellect, with a species of natural eloquence, and this extended beyond the range of his own profession. There was always something pleasing and profitable in his conversation. He loved the State, and whatsoever was good he valued for its intrinsic worth, which, alas ! has become a thing of rare occurrence."

THE END.

THE LAMP OF THE SANCTUARY.

CHAPTER I.

ITS BRIGHTNESS.

"Who will grant me that I might be according to the days in which God kept me, when His lamp shined over my head?" (Job, xxix. 2, 3.)

IN the recesses of the Pyrenees, not far from the Spanish border, there was (our tale is of the last century), a small rural chapel situated on a hill, known by the name of Mont-Marie. The chapel itself was simple and unpretending, solidly built, and of considerable antiquity. The inside was, however, richly adorned. The altar had silver furniture, and the walls round it were covered with votive tablets, and with silver donatives, hung in commemoration of favors piously believed to have been received through the intercession of the blessed Mother of God, to whom the chapel was dedicated. Indeed it was celebrated through the neighboring country for many miles round, as a place of great devotion, almost a pilgrimage. Over, but behind the altar, on which was a rich tabernacle, stood an image of the spotless Virgin, bearing in her arms her Divine Son. It was nearly as large as life, of white marble and of ancient workmanship. Every one who looked at it with a favorable light pronounced it a matchless piece of art, a work of highest inspiration. Nothing could be more benign, more sweet, than the expression of the Mother, nothing more winning, yet more majestic, than the countenance of the Child.

In the midst of the sanctuary, before the altar, was hung a silver lamp, as is usual in Catholic churches and oratories, burning day and night. Never, on the most tempestuous night, was it known to be extinguished; for it was abundantly supplied, by the piety of the people, with the purest oil from the olive-yards of the country. And this to many of them was a matter of great importance. For the lamp was a beacon and a sure guide to the traveller at night. It was, therefore, so hung that its bright radiance shone through a round window over the door, and could be seen to a great distance. The path which led from several hamlets to the main road in the valley, passed near this chapel; it was a narrow rugged track along the mountain's side, skirting a precipice; and the direction given to the traveller was to go boldly forward so long as the light of the chapel was visible before him; but so soon as it disappeared by a jutting of a rock, to turn sharp to the right and fearlessly descend, as the precipice was now exchanged for a gentle slope that led to the wider road. So certain was this rule, that no accident was remembered to have ever happened along that path. Thus did a beautiful symbolical rite of worship lend itself to a most beneficial purpose, and become the cause of great social good; thus did the altar of God send abroad its cheerful brightness to light up the dark and wearisome path, (alas! how like that

of life)! and thus were the solitary traveller's thoughts attracted to the sphere where his guiding-star burnt clear before the mercy-throne of the Lamb, there to offer, in spirit, homage; or led to think on that wakeful Eye of Providence which darts its ray from a higher sanctuary upon our joyless way, to cheer and guide us thither.

The chapel was under the care of a hermit priest, who lived in an humble dwelling beside it, and ministered to the spiritual wants of the neighborhood, as the parish church was at some distance.

On the road which we have described, and about two miles from the chapel, was a poor small mountain hamlet, inhabited chiefly by woodmen who worked in the forests around. Among the cottages which composed it, one was remarkable for its neatness, though as poor as the rest; and the young couple that occupied it were no less distinguished as the most industrious, the most virtuous, and the happiest in the place. While Pierrot was sturdily working among the hills, his wife Annette was sitting at her wheel spinning incessantly, unless busied with domestic cares; while at her feet sat their only child, not yet three years old, but already giving tokens of great sense and virtue. Like every other child born under the tutelage of that chapel, she had been called at baptism Marie. The child was the delight of her parents, for with great liveliness of disposition and cheerfulness, she united sweetness of temper and gentleness of mind. It may be easily imagined how they watched her every look with the anxiety of fond affection.

It was with dismay, therefore, that about this time each parent observed a notable falling off in her good looks and in her spirits. For some days neither durst speak on the subject to the other; but at last it became manifestly necessary to call in medical advice, for the child was growing every day paler and thinner, and was losing strength. But every effort of human skill proved vain, and the physician declared that nothing short of a miracle could save the child. The parents were disconsolate, and seemed distracted with their grief, till, finding no comfort on earth, they turned their thoughts more fervently to heaven, where, however, they had all along sought help.

It was a fine autumn evening, when the heart-broken parents were seen slowly walking along the narrow path we have described, evidently directing their steps towards Mont-Marie. The mother bore a precious burthen in her arms, lighter indeed than the one she carried in her heart. It was her frail and sickly child carefully wrapped up, though the afternoon was warm.

When they reached the chapel it was still day, and many of the peasantry were there making their evening visit as they returned from their work. The door was open, and the western sun streamed in full glory through it, and steeped the interior of the place with a golden lustre, giving to the paintings and

hangings, and the bright ornaments of the altar, a richness and magnificence truly royal. It seemed as if it was the hour of majesty, the time for urging great and noble suits at the throne of power; the presence-chamber of the King of kings seemed gorgeously arrayed to hear the song of the joyful heart, and to dispense the treasures of redundant blessings. And each and every one of those peasants, kneeling in scattered groups in fervent worship, scarcely able to bear the dazzling sparks of light which the sun-beams struck from the silver tabernacle, was at that moment ennobled and graced beyond the richest and proudest of earth's lords. Their rustic costume was embroidered by the golden pencil of heaven, their honest heads surrounded, and, in a manner, crowned by a flood of glory, and their countenances upturned with glowing features, and moistened eyes, towards that Presence, before which all earthly royalty is base. And now the organ pealed forth its powerful notes, and all united in a simple, but overpowering strain of evening thanksgiving.

It was at this moment that Pierrot and his wife reached the threshold of the door; and both instinctively paused as if unable to enter in. That sparkling light, that golden atmosphere, those joyful looks, those swelling notes, accorded not with their errand, sympathized not with their hearts, jarred, broken, fretted as they were. They were not coming to urge high and peculiar claims, but to seek pity, mercy and peace. In a moment, however, they both felt confused at their apparent want of confidence; and, assuming boldly the privilege ever granted by Catholic feeling to the distressed, advanced to the steps leading to the Sanctuary. On these the mother laid her helpless burthen; and both, kneeling down, covered their streaming eyes from the overpowering, though fading, splendor that oppressed them. Long, deep, and breathless was their prayer. During it the music had ceased, the peasants had one by one glided out, and the hermit having closed the door, and with it shut out the last dying reflection of the western sky, whispered to the afflicted father as he retired, "I have left the door unlocked, stay as long as you please. Have courage, and may God comfort you; and, through the intercession of His blessed Mother, hear your prayers." He was not like Heli that good hermit, who chid Anna in the temple because of her troubled supplication.

At these words, both uncovered their faces and raised their eyes. They were alone with their child: a perfect silence reigned around them. There was no light but what was shed by the lamp of the Sanctuary, between them and the altar. Hanging in mid-air, this seemed as a fountain of mildest radiance, not shot forth in rays, not scattered abroad in fiery sparks, not playing wantonly in unsteady flame, but, softly and equably diffused from its source on every side, filling the centre of the holy place with a halo of serenest, purest light, and thence overflowing in a more subdued and blander stream, into the remoter parts and angles of the roof and walls. It was a light that appeared to exert a stilling, hushing power on nature; one could not conceive noise or disturbance going on under it; a laugh, a harsh word, an angry murmur would have sounded sacrilegious, if they could have been possibly attempted. It created an atmosphere of its own; as though that soft attempered light diffused a corresponding warmth through the air, which the frost without could not chill; for no one could feel cold beneath its genial glow. It gave a softness and beauty to the commonest objects; the rude memorials of benefits received that hung around, and the poor paintings which adorned the upper parts of the walls, had their imperfect details concealed, and their more prominent features brought out in a subdued tone, that made them look like masterpieces of art; and countenances which by day looked stern, by this mild light, were gentle and engaging. But it was on the inward feelings that its kindest influence was shed. It seemed to kindle in the breast a holy light like unto itself, beaming, serene and soothing, over its disturbed affections, subduing pride and loftiness of spirit, calming anger, engentling austerity and smoothening the folds of the crafty thought. It unruffled, it softened, it melted the soul, and

fitted it for tender and gentle emotions.

And when, thus feeling all without them in perfect harmony with their own thoughts, the unhappy parents raised their eyes towards the image of their Redeemer and His Mother, the full radiance of that lamp upon it revealed features so full of love and compassion, that never did this representation of them appear so lovely, or so truly a portrait of what in their hearts they now wished to find them both. For they felt that *this* was the hour for appeals for mercy and pity on distress; here was the inner audience-chamber, where the petition of the poor would be kindly received face to face, whispered into the ear.

Long and fervently did the parents pray over their child under the solemn inspiration of the place and hour. There was more of depth in the father's fervor, more of tenderness in the mother's; but both made together a joint petition, they offered up a common vow. If the child recovered, she was for the next seven years to be clothed in white, as an emblem of dedication to the purest of maids, brought up ever in piety and devotion; and her parents would fast once a week during the same period.

"Yes," exclaimed Pierrot, in the simple poetry of nature, "she shall be white and pure as the lily, whose root has been fed by the mountain snow; she shall be as a flower before the altar of God. She shall shine in His sanctuary as the lamp that now hangs over her; her virtues shall shed a mild lustre through the holy place, as she kneels in conscious gratitude, where now she lies. Extinguish not the light of our eyes! and let not death presume to touch her now consecrated to Thee, any more than a sacrilegious hand will ever dare to quench this holy flame that burns before Thine altar!"

While the parents were engaged in prayer their child seemed to be enjoying a slumber calmer and healthier than she had for several weeks; and in this they saw the first symptom of recovery. It was late when they returned home, but the child still slept; and next morning she was evidently better. In a few more days she was at her usual place by her mother's knee. She was now what is called in France *vouée au blanc*, clothed entirely, according to vow, in virgin white. And as she grew from day to day in sense and virtue, so was she looked upon by all the good people in the neighborhood, as one dedicated to God, and privileged by grace. Hence, by common accord, the place of honor seemed granted to her in church, the spot in the centre on which she had been laid in her sickness.

There, as she grew older, she would kneel immoveable for hours, and when at dusk the crowd of peasants who filled the oratory, in the dark costume of the country, formed a confused mass, her form, arrayed in dazzling white, in the full radiance of the mystic lamp, shone bright and clear as if fulfilling her father's prayer, and seemed itself to shed a light upon the darker objects around. In silent meditation and fervent prayer, in the soft glow of that sacred lamp, her heart, too, found delight. The glories of the evening sun, the clear splendor of the summer noon, had no charms for her, like to its softened ray. It seemed to her to shed around a light so chaste and pure as could brook thoughts none but the holiest and most angelic; nor could words, save the most warm and tender, bear to be breathed therein. Heavenly spirits seemed to bask in it, and the cherubs were playing on the cloud of glory that hung around the flame. Nor was it to the eyes alone that this mysterious and symbolical light appeared so beautiful. With it there seemed to come music to her ears, voices whispering prayer in accordance with hers, songs subdued and tender, as of spirits striking softly upon golden harps. And it seemed to scatter ever the sweetest fragrance, a balm, an incense pure from every gross and earthly particle. In fine, no place to her appeared more closely allied to heaven, and no situation raised her on wings of holy desire so gently from earth, as did that lonely sanctuary, enjoyed in the light of its own dear star.

It has been observed that persons living much together come to contract a certain resemblance to one another, so as to be,

often taken for near relations; and so did many think, that by frequent and long kneeling before that beautiful image of the spotless Virgin Mother, with gaze intent upon it in that mild light, her features gradually moulded themselves into the same meek and modest expression, as though she were the living, as that was the lifeless portrait, of the same original.

CHAPTER II.

ITS DARKENING.

"May the counsel of the wicked be far from me. How often shall the lamp of the wicked be put out, and a deluge come upon them, and He shall distribute the sorrows of His wrath." (Job, xxi. 17.)

Nearly six years had now passed over since the vow was spoken; and they had been years all of joy and happiness, when a change came over the household of Pierrot, which blighted it sadly, and brought with it sorrow and woe.

A little before this time, two strange men came with their families to settle in the neighborhood. They were a rough set, and no one knew anything about them. They took a piece of land at some distance from any other dwelling and built themselves large huts of timber, much like those of others; but while they were working at them they seemed jealous of any one's coming to look at them; and when they were finished they never invited any one inside. The men did not seem to have any particular occupation, and the women were idle and slovenly; yet they always seemed to be better off than their neighbors, and on Sundays made a very dashing appearance. Nobody knew what to think of them, but it was clear there was some mystery about them.

A few months after they had settled there, a sensible alteration in the character of Pierrot was observable by his wife and daughter. He went to his work with less cheerfulness, and got apparently through with much less of it, for his earnings clearly fell off. He was thoughtful and reserved, almost moody, and for the first time had evidently a painful secret which he concealed from his family. Instead of returning home as soon as his work was done to enjoy their society, they would have to wait for some hours in silent grief, and when he came in, he was cold and silent, and made some poor excuse for his lateness. At length one day when he went to work, he said to his wife; "Annette, I shall probably not return till very late to-night—so don't sit up for me. I have important business which may even detain me all night." He gave no time for remonstrance, but hurried forth. Oh! what a sorrowful day was that for mother and daughter! they scarcely spoke all day, and each tried to hide her tears from the other: for the child, though eight years of age, had sense enough to know that things were going fearfully wrong. Towards evening, therefore, both, guided by the same impulse, took the road towards Mont-Marie, to pour forth their grief and seek consolation at the foot of the altar. There Marie knelt in her usual place behind the lamp; she raised her eyes and her heart, and was soon absorbed in meditation. And her meditation was this:

She thought of the desolate home which awaited the blessed Mother of our Lord as she descended from Calvary; the joyless chamber, the restless couch, prepared for her after a day of anguish and of blight. There, comparing sorrow with sorrow, how trifling appeared her own affliction beside hers! There, eyes that fall on garments sprinkled from the wine-press, trodden that day, of God's justice; there, ears that yet ring with the clang of the hammer, forcing nails through the quivering flesh; there, a heart pierced through with a sword of grief panting to its core with the keenest of material sorrows; there, body and soul staggering under a weight of anguish that would have crushed a frame of iron and a mind of adamant, but can be borne up by her unresisting patience. And in the thought of such an ocean of sorrows, how small a drop did those appear to that child of grace, which the heavenly Father had allotted her! And now, after each kind friend that

has accompanied this sovereign Lady to her humble home has departed, she sees her left at last alone in the silence of night, with the lamp (fed perhaps from the garden of Gethsemani), beaming upon her pale countenance, on which that day has written more of woe than years had traced before, glittering in tear after tear, as it trickles from her dimmed celestial eye, watching alone beside her, sole thing that cheers and sheds a ray of comfort through the dreary chamber and the drearier heart. And, in her childish thoughts, she blessed that pale and trembling light which then gave Mary comfort; and felt as though the little flame above her, shining now upon her and upon the sacred representation of that Queen of Sorrows before her, were the faithful representative and descendant of that which then lighted up and cheered her sanctuary at home. Its calm twilight thus exercised its soothing influence on the innocent child's spirit, and associated her afflictions with the holiest that earth had ever witnessed. She felt as though she suffered in company with the noblest and blessedest among women; and the total darkness which had before overspread her soul, was lighted up by a cheering ray, mild, serene, and pure as that which tempered the shadows of night within that sanctuary. She felt that she could return to her desolate home, with resignation at least, after what she had contemplated.

But before she rose from prayer, she had made an offering to the Almighty, through the hands of the Blessed Virgin, which she did not tell to her mother for some time after. She felt as though it was accepted, and she was comforted.

Let it not be thought that we have described conduct or feelings beyond the age of such a child. In the world we ordinarily have no idea of the maturity of grace to which children brought up under the Church's wings, are sometimes brought by Him who "out of the mouths of babes and sucklings bringeth forth perfect praise." We hear often amongst us of precocious talent, seldom of precocious virtue; yet one is as natural in its own order as the other. But not only do the lives of Saints, as those of St. Rose of Lima, St. Mary Magdalen de' Pazzi, St. Catharine of Siena, present us with instances of intelligence and spiritual illumination in even an earlier age, but at this day are yet such examples to be found, and that within the compass of our own knowledge. And if parents, mothers in particular, knew how to train their children from the cradle for God; if instead of fondling their infant humors, and caressing their very passions and caprices, they turned the first dawn of their reason to the knowledge and consideration of the Divine goodness; and shaped their lips to utter as first sounds the two sweetest names in human speech, many who now have to weep over the follies and vices of their offspring, might be thanking God instead, for having blessed their family with a Saint.

But to proceed: when the mother and daughter returned home, they were far better able to encounter the melancholy of their cottage than when they left it; nor did its gloom appear so deep, especially to the latter. She seemed almost cheerful, as she bade her mother put her trust in God and in the intercession of His Blessed Mother. It was late next morning, when Pierrot suddenly entered, with a pale and haggard look; cast a purse upon the table at which his wife and daughter were sitting, and hurried without uttering a word into his bed-room. They both gazed long in silent amazement at the unwonted sight; and when Pierrot after a few hours' troubled rest came back, he was surprised and mortified at finding his purse lying untouched where he had thrown it.

"What is the meaning of this?" he asked with some bitterness. "Do you take that purse for some venomous animal, that you have been afraid to touch it?"

"Pierrot," answered his wife, "how is it come by?"

"Honestly I assure you" he replied. "You do not, I hope, think me capable of theft or robbery?"

"God forbid!" rejoined his wife, "but you have done very little work of late; and it would take long in your craft, even with great industry, to amass such a sum. A purseful like

that, got in one night, looks, you will own, to say the least, suspicious."

"Then make yourselves easy," said Pierrot, "it is honestly come by. I have fallen in with acquaintances, who have put me into the way of a successful commercial speculation; and these I hope are only its first fruits."

The poor woman was glad to receive the comfort of his words. But though she looked contented and put up the purse, she could not bring herself to use its contents. She redoubled her industry, and wore herself to death at her wheel, to keep up appearances and ward off famine; but neither she nor her daughter would touch the suspicious gold. And often would Pierrot bring more, after having been out a night, and sometimes two and the intervening day; and yet the store remained untouched. For one sign was in their eyes decisive; Pierrot was no longer the same. He neglected every religious duty, was seldom at church except on the Sunday, and then seemed to have no pleasure in its duties.

Once it happened, that his little daughter enticed him in the afternoon to Mont-Marie, where taking her usual place she prayed earnestly for him, and renewed the offering of herself before alluded to; she prolonged her prayer beyond dusk, by the favorite light of the Sanctuary lamp; but on rising from her knees, she found her father gone. He was waiting outside, and on her affectionately remonstrating with him on his impatience in leaving the church, he replied:

"For my part, I wonder how you can stay so long, and pray by that dim and dismal light. By it the church looked to me like a dark sepulchral vault, so gloomy and oppressive. The pictures on the walls stared at me like so many ghosts, or appeared to frown upon me. It made even the image of the Blessed Virgin look cold and stern. I could not stand it, and came out to breathe a mouthful of fresh air."

The child sighed, and said, "Ah! dearest father, you used not to speak so. There must be something amiss in that breast that loves not, or dares not, to pray by the still light of the Sanctuary's lamp!"

Pierrot walked home in silence, and for some weeks was more steady at his work. But he soon relapsed into his former habits, and even extended his absence from home to longer periods; to weeks instead of days. It is time, however, that we explain the cause of his unhappy change. The new comers to his neighborhood, whom we have mentioned, belonged to a rough and unprincipled class, that hang (especially in mountain districts) about the frontiers of foreign countries. They were contrabandists or smugglers, who contracted for a certain profit, to carry French goods over the Spanish border without paying duty; and this was often done by large parties on a great scale, in spite of the vigilance of revenue officers, whom they did not scruple to attack and fight in case of surprise. These two men and their families were old offenders and experienced hands. Being too well known at their former station, and having observed, in the neighborhood of Mont-Marie, passes comparatively but slightly guarded, in consequence of the honesty of the peasantry, they had determined to turn the circumstance to their advantage, and came to settle in that neighborhood. But to succeed, they saw it was necessary to get some one to join them who was well acquainted with every nook and track among the crags and mountains; and having taken some time to pick up acquaintance with the characters of their neighbors, they fixed upon poor Pierrot as their victim, not only as he was an expert mountaineer, but because his very gentleness of character, the result of his virtue, would enable them, could they but once corrupt him, to keep him more completely under their power, than one of a rougher and sterner cast.

They began, therefore, artfully to insinuate themselves into his familiarity and friendship, by expressing an interest in him and his family, and their pity at seeing him toiling all day for a paltry pittance, when by commercial undertakings, sure of success, he could put himself in far better circumstances. Pierrot listened at first with indifference, and then with curiosity, which soon grew up into eagerness, to their tempting sug-

gestions. At length they unfolded their schemes more openly, and he was startled. But for this they were prepared; and after the first shock was over, they began to remove his scruples. They told him speciously that they were French subjects, and consequently not bound by the Spanish laws, which alone forbade the introduction of goods across the boundary; that, consequently, with them this could not be wrong, but was merely a commercial speculation, attended with risk of seizure, just like a venture in time of war, or a ship's freight sent through the boisterous ocean in winter.

Pierrot was at last engaged to join in one of their expeditions; they took care that it should be a safe, easy, and pleasant one; and he received as his share of the profit the purse which he threw on the table of his cottage. Although his conscience was ill at ease, the love of money had now struck deep root in his heart; and he was soon so surrounded with the toils of his artful seducers, that he had no longer strength to disentangle himself or to break through them. Such is the history of many a weak but good mind, that has but listened to the arts of a deceiver. Its very goodness makes it an unequal match for well-trained cunning and daring profligacy. After its first fall its powers are broken, and it allows itself to be led by the will of the ensnarer.

After Pierrot's visit, described above, to the Sanctuary of Mont-Marie, his companions, afraid of his escape from them, and of his betraying them, determined to involve him still deeper in crime. First, when they had again prevailed on him to join them, they took him upon a more venturesome expedition, which, as they had foreseen, led to an encounter with the revenue-guard; shots were fired, blows were struck, and the pass was forced by sheer violence. A few days after, placards were posted in all the neighboring villages, offering rewards for the discovery of the offenders, with free pardon to accomplices who should betray them. Pierrot's tyrants next showed him these, and threatened, on his first attempt to dispute their will, to carry him over the frontier, and deliver him to the authorities.

He was now their victim, their tool in any wicked enterprise. He had no longer a will of his own; he seemed to have delivered his very soul into their hands, and there was no extent of crime, short of murder, to which they did not lead him, at their pleasure. They had at length ventured to unveil to him their real characters, as outlaws and banditti. They made him join them in their midnight robberies; but he sickened at the very thoughts of polluting his once happy dwelling with the fruit of his villainies; he refused a share in the spoils, and whenever he returned home, it was only with more haggard looks, more tortured conscience, and an empty purse.

He loathed his very life, he gnawed his very heart in sorrow, and the most desperate thoughts, even of self-destruction, began to haunt his mind. His companions saw him sometimes looking over the edge of a precipice, as if deliberating whether to throw himself head-long, or feeling the point of a dagger, as if meditating a self-aimed blow. But a cold shudder would creep over his frame; he would draw suddenly back, or cast the weapon away; while his companions would break into a coarse peal of laughter, and dare him to accomplish his thought. Yes! thanks to Heaven, Pierrot had not yet lost his belief in eternity; he remembered that there was a bottomless gulf below the depths of the precipice, and that there was a sword of divine justice, keener than the dagger's point.

But his companions saw that they would soon lose their hold on him, that his desperation would drive him to some deed that would betray them. They, therefore, with artful villany changed their course. They assured him of their willingness to release him from his painful life. One, only one more enterprise did they require him to join, it was an easy and safe one: and after that they would quit the neighborhood, and he should be left at peace. At peace! little did they know or care, how effectually they had driven this from his heart, how they had banished it from his life! Still, to him there was comfort in their words; and he almost longed to commit the crime which was to be his last. A day was fixed for it, yet a

month off, and this seemed like an age to Pierrot. Nor could any entreaties prevail on them to communicate to him the nature of their intention. Only he clearly saw preparations making at their houses, for a complete and sudden flight; and in this he felt he had the best pledge and security for the truth of their promises.

Let us in the mean time, return to consider his poor wife and child. Every month of the period, over which we have traced Pierrot's evil course, had sunk them deeper in misery and in sorrow. Of the character of his crimes they had no evidence; for as he never brought home his share of plunder, and as he kept a moody silence and reserve, they had no ground on which to suspect farther, than that he was engaged in something very wrong. Even when at home, he could get but little work, for now no one cared to employ him; and so his once neat and happy dwelling bore marks of poverty, neglect, and decay. And within, too, all was sorrow and distress; no cheerful conversation, no smile, no confidence. The mother and the daughter, indeed, understood one another, but it was more by silent sympathy, than by exchange of sentiment; for each feared ever to swell the other's grief, and generally stifled her inward feelings, and repressed the gushing tear, or wept alone. And let this be added to the praises of the poor, that none better than they have the inborn delicacy to honor virtue in distress, and refrain from sarcasm and reproach against those whom bitter trials oppress. Never was the conduct of Pierrot, though now notorious and a public scandal, cast into the face of these two forlorn ones, morally indeed a widow and an orphan. But rather it seemed as if a tacit honor was paid to their suffering innocence; every one made way for them; every one seemed to soften his voice as he addressed them; many a little present, artfully conveyed, so as to repress all sense of obligation, made its way to their cottage to soothe their distress; and many a kind hope that God would console them, was whispered at the church door in their ear.

And He did, in truth console them: for without His Presence, His Grace, His Light, His Food, their hearts would long since have been broken by despairing sorrow. Again and again did they kneel at evening before the altar, and there ever found they the calm and peace which resignation to the Divine Will alone can give. It was on one of these occasions that a new association of ideas led our little contemplative to consoling thoughts, akin to those which we have seen the Sanctuary's Lamp had before suggested; only from the sorrows of the Mother, it guided her to those of the Son. She had been reading in her little rude picture-bible, and had there seen illustrated the vision of Zacharias (chap. iv.) in which is described the golden candlestick before the altar, on either side whereof stands an olive tree, the over-hanging branches of which, through golden funnels, feed the sacred lamps, with an unfailing light and unction, (verse 12). To this her thoughts reverted as the soothing light of the lamp fell upon her; and wearied much with sorrow, she fell into one of those calm moods of meditation, in which the thoughts arise spontaneously, and pass, as on a mirror, before the mind, seeming but the reflection of objects presented by an external, but invisible, power. It appeared to her as though the lamp before the altar were enlarged in its dimensions, and became a golden font, in the midst of which burnt a flame, celestial in its purity and brightness; while over its edge flowed on every side, a rich amber wave of purest oil, some of which was caught up by unseen hands in golden phials, and borne away as a precious treasure into the Church's stores; whence dispensed, in a triple stream, it hallowed the child, consecrated the high priests of God, and anointed the dying wrestler against the powers of hell; while some fell in drops like balm upon her and others, and where it fell closed a wound, or healed a sore, or soothed a pain, or stilled a throb. It dropped upon her lips, and it was bitter with the bitterness of myrrh, but withal savory, and as a cordial to her breast. Then as she wondered whence came this marvellous overflow of abundance (like the filling of the widow of Sarepta's vessels), she saw above a branch of a dark and gloomy olive, which over

hang it, and distilled into it, from its purple fruit, thick, clammy drops of healing juice. And when again she wondered whence this chosen plant derived its sacred sap, she looked naturally down towards its twisted roots, and there beheld One prostrate as in anguish and prayer. His face could not be seen, for His pale forehead touched the ground; but His dark robe seemed as studded with princely gems, rubies, or carbuncles, of sparkling brightness. And by degrees these increased in size and began to flow, trickling, as a dew, upon that consecrated ground. For they were the first life-drops, earnest of a fuller flow, which burst through those pores, whence virtue went out to heal all. By these was fed and enriched, while it was hallowed, that tree which first, after the deluge, put forth branches of promise, of peace, and of hope, and sent by the dove the first tidings of reconciliation to the world baptised. And hence the fruit of that tree was made third in order of the earth's most precious produce, joined ever to the "corn and the wine" in the threats and in the promises of prophecy,* and forming with them the triple power, whereby men are multiplied and strengthened in sacramental life.†

To that thoughtful child's heart there seemed as clear connection between this consecration and its fruits, as there was between our Lord's descending into the waters of Jordan, and the mystical sanctification of that cleansing element. The olive consecrated by the holy unction of our Redeemer's first blood, became to the Church a sacred tree, whose juice can soften, nourish, heal, render at once supple and strong, the soul sacramentally, as the body naturally, and alone is fit, with the produce of the industry of the virgin bee, to light up the Sanctuary of God.‡ These musings of the sorrowful child brought their consolation, by leading her thoughts to that scene of sorrow, in which even *agony* of mind may learn resignation. And this thought struck her. If in the courts of the heavenly Jerusalem it shall be said to holy virgins, spouses of the Lamb, "God, thy God hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness," shall it not be said that here below there is *an oil of affliction* too, with which the servants of God are anointed, and rendered thereby no less pleasing? And happy the virgin who, waiting for her Bridegroom, has her lamp trimmed with this holy oil, aye, and plenty of it in her vessel too, lest it be extinguished. And if it fail her, oh! let her hasten in time thither, where best it can be found and procured, to the Mount of Olives, the hill of unction and of light.

While the youthful contemplative was enjoying these thoughts, and praying that her lamp might be found burning whenever the summons should come, her mother touched her shoulder, and admonished her that it was time to return home. The visions of her childish imagination melted away, and she found herself once more, basking in the mild lustre of the Sanctuary's lamp.

CHAPTER III.

ITS EXTINCTION.

"The light shall be dark in his tabernacle, and the lamp that is over him shall be put out." Job xviii.

It is a trite remark, that as a lamp will shine the more brightly in proportion to the darkness which surrounds it, so will virtue appear more brilliant when the gloom of adversity has closed around it. Or, still drawing our illustration from our subject, we may say, that as the lamps of Gideon's soldiers

*Deut. xi. : 14; and xxviii. : 51. Jer. xxxi. : 12. Os. ii. : 8.

†Ps. iv. : 8. "By the fruit of their corn, wine, and oil, they have been multiplied."

‡To burn gas (as the lamp) before the altar, or upon it, is not only in contradiction to every mystical feeling and symbolical principle, but seems positively unbecoming. With what can it associate the mind except with the bituminous and sulphurous classes of natural productions, and with the exhalations of the depths of the earth—things and places more akin to the awful, than to the consoling, dealings of God with man?

did not show their dazzling brilliancy, till the vessels of clay in which they were inclosed had been bruised, broken, and utterly crushed, so did the virtues of Pierrot's wife and daughter break forth with increased lustre, the more their poor humanity was bowed down, the more their bodies were wasted with want, and their hearts broken with affliction. Upon that of the daughter a new grief seemed now to have come; but though it passed occasionally like a cloud over her brow, sufficiently distinct not to escape her watchful mother's eye, yet was it always succeeded immediately by a bright serenity, which clearly came not from earthly consolation. While they were sitting together at their work in silence, a sigh would escape her, a tear would steal down; but the next instant her hands would drop upon her knees, her eyes and countenance be upturned toward heaven, a bright smile would beam upon her features, and her lips would move as if addressing some one near. In those moments her mother ventured not to address her, but would gaze on her in admiration and awe, believing her to be in close communion with better spirits.

At length, one day she asked her what now so much occupied her thoughts. "I will conceal nothing from you, my dearest mother," replied the child; "the truth is, I can hardly bear to think that in a few days my term of consecration, under your vow, will expire, and that I must put off my white garment, and resume that of the world."

"And yet, my child," her mother answered, "it is better for us all that it should beso. You are now getting strong enough to go to work in the fields, and this is impossible in your present attire. Nor can I go and leave you alone at home. It is indeed necessary that we should exert ourselves more and more; for"—she paused, for what she was going to say would have been a reproach to her husband, and that she would not utter. But her tears expressed her meaning. Her daughter replied:

"It is not that I grudge toil, or shrink from being what I in truth am, a poor peasant girl; but I feel as though, in putting off this religious attire, I shall be exposing myself more completely to the dangers and temptations of the world; and, perhaps losing some claim to that protection of the Queen of Heaven, as whose child I have been till now brought up.

"But it is time, my dear mother, that I should tell you of an offering which I made on that night when, for the first time, he absented himself from home, and have often since repeated before the altar. There I have again and again prayed that I may never be allowed to put off my white garments, but may be allowed to bear them down into my grave unstained, and farther"—she hesitated and faltered as she added, "I have begged of God to take my life in exchange for my dear father's conversion and return to virtue. I cannot help hoping that my prayer and offering have been accepted."

Her mother was greatly troubled on hearing this, and hastily answered: "Beware, my child, lest you tempt Heaven. May God hear your prayer on behalf of your poor father, but not on that condition. Indeed," she added, after a moment's reflection, "I do not see what reason there can be to fear it; for never, in spite of our sufferings, did you seem to me stronger or in better health."

It was now, notwithstanding, finally arranged between mother and daughter, that on the morning of the anniversary of the vow they should proceed very early to the church, so to enjoy a few hours' silent prayer, by the light of the sacred lamp, which the child loved so much, before receiving Communion in thanksgiving; after which, she would change her white dress for the ordinary peasant's cloak and so return home. And these preliminaries arranged, and the priest's consent obtained, who was to leave the church door open for them, they both forbore to revert again to the subject. Only Marie seemed ever intent on it, in her thoughts, now occupied in preparing the dress in which she would make her last appearance, as one consecrated to God, that its whiteness and purity might be perfect; and in weaving a garland of choicest flowers, as her last offering, to crown the image of her Lady and Patroness.

But once again, we must withdraw our reader's attention from the contemplation of the virtues of mother and daughter, to trace the ruinous course of the unfortunate Pierrot, and see him plunged, at last, into the lowest abyss of guilt and degradation. The month was expired, which had been agreed on before the commission of the crime, promised to be his last. The day in fact was come, on the night of which it had to be perpetrated, and still an impenetrable secret was preserved by all around him as to what it was to be. By this time, every thing worth moving in the house of the two accomplices, was packed up for instant flight, and mules were in readiness to carry their baggage and families over the frontiers. As to himself, he had not taken any measures, to fly or to secure himself against the pursuit of justice; not merely because he was in such ignorance about the crime, that he knew not how he could best shape his course, especially with his family on his hands; but also, because he was almost reckless as to consequences, and hardly cared what the result might be. A prey to remorse, to shame, and to bitter grief, he would have preferred a prison, the galleys, or the scaffold, to his present state; and forgot all consequences and risks in the assurance that, after this one crime he should be freed from his present thralldom. During that last day of his partnership in guilt, his companions strove to occupy his thoughts and divert him from unpleasant anticipations by their wild discourse; and after their meal they plied him with drink, which, if it did not actually intoxicate him, dulled his faculties, and heated his blood. He was ready for anything, and he seemed to have made up his mind for any crime, in a desperate mood of excitement, almost amounting to frenzy. And still he shuddered within himself at thinking that possibly murder might be demanded from him; no other wicked deed now seemed to him terrible or impossible. And yet, when the proposed crime was unveiled to him, it was as much beyond his thoughts as this, and appeared to him no less frightful; and he shrank from it with a trembling horror that staggered his very companions.

It was not till late that night, when on the point of starting from their house, that the object of their expedition was revealed to Pierrot. It was no less than to plunder the church of Mont-Marie, to strip it of its silver donatives, its rich altarpiece, the ornaments of its image and its tabernacle, and carry the whole over the frontier into Spain. They had made all necessary arrangements for concealing or melting down their rich booty, so as to escape detection.

Had a thunderbolt struck the head of the unfortunate Pierrot, he could hardly have been more stunned than he was on hearing this. The moment he was a little recovered from his first amazement he began to storm and protest that no consideration on earth should ever prevail on him to commit so horrible and so ungrateful a sacrilege. But his companions now knew their power, and dealt with him as a skilful angler does with a fish that feels the first smart of the hook; they gave him play, and allowed him to vent his feelings; and then, when he had exhausted his first burst of passion, began to draw him into the full gripe of their wicked might. For this purpose, they represented to him that it was too late to draw back—for if he attempted it, they would immediately fulfil their threats of delivering him up. They told him that it was mere folly to shrink from the commission of one crime more, which they had promised him should be his last; that if ever he repented, it would be as easy to repent of this as of its predecessors; if not, that he was fully lost by what he had already done, and could not make his case worse. Many other wicked arguments and persuasions they employed, and when at last all else had failed, they savagely threatened to wreak their vengeance upon his family, and to proceed at once to murder his wife and daughter.

They had two motives for this cruel earnestness, in wishing to have him as their accomplice. First, from his conversations they had ascertained that he knew accurately what was of real and what of apparent value among the ornaments of the church; what was really of silver and what only of baser metal.

as he had often assisted as voluntary sacristan there in his better days. They, on the contrary, had never taken more than a cursory glance at the riches accumulated in the sanctuary—enough to inflame their desires but not to guide them in the selection of spoil. But, farther, they had a still baser and blacker motive; they had only valued Pierrot as a tool, and having no farther use for his active services after that night, it was their intention to make him serviceable as a victim, by flying themselves, and leaving him behind to be seized on by public justice, so themselves to elude its pursuit. His connection with them, who would, of course, be suspected, and the weakness of his character, which would make him at once own his guilt, would bring down upon him the vengeance of the law, which would thus be less eager in its search after them. Such were the fiendish feelings of his companions for him; such, in other words, is the friendship of the wicked!

The terrible menace of the ruffians was uttered with such rage, and yet in so determined a tone, that, with Pierrot's experience of their character, he saw it was made in earnest, and would be unscrupulously carried into execution. His resolution failed him; the thought of all his past neglect and cruel abandonment of those whom in his secret heart he still loved and actually revered rushed upon him. Must he in the end prove their death, their murderer in some sort? He could not bear to think it, and in an agony of contending feelings, and with a protest to heaven, he chose what he thought the lesser curse, and consented to accompany his tyrants.

Time urged, for they had lost much of the night in this contention; but still it wanted some hours to day, and the robbers durst not now put off their enterprise. Silent and sullen they reached the church-door, and it was agreed that one should stay outside with the mule, and keep watch, while the leader with Pierrot should enter, and bring out the spoil.

They found the door unlocked; but this did not surprise them; for no one in the neighborhood ever dreamt of the possibility of sacrilege. Cautiously and silently they opened it, and entered in. Both paused upon the threshold, as if overawed; even the hardened robber seemed afraid to advance. So deeply still and silent was that lonely sanctuary, that Pierrot could actually hear his heart beat against his side, as it throbbed in remorse and fear. The flame of the lamp was burning bright and clear, and the entire holy place basked in its tempered radiance. Never, in his days of virtue, had it looked to him more sacred, more venerable, or more lovely, than it did on this night of his basest treachery! Never did the silver and jewels of the altar beam more joyously, never did the saints from the walls look down upon him more softly, never did the image over the altar seem to gaze upon him with a sweeter, blander smile, than now that his mind was bent on sacrilege! "Ah, Judas!" they all seemed to say to him in words of soft reproof, "wilt thou betray the spouse of the Son of Man with a kiss?" He could not bear the sight, and he cast his eyes upon the ground; and there he thought he saw his infant child, as she lay seven years before on the steps before him, slumbering once more the sleep of health, and himself kneeling in quiet gratitude beside her. Yes, every thing around him looked to him now just as it did then—all except his own breast; alas! how changed was that! He flung his vision, by a forcible effort, from his imagination, and raised his eyes; and in doing so, encountered the steady gaze of the lamp, which shed all this beauty and mysterious charm on every object. What the eye of a man—"the light of his body"—is to his other features, even that did the pure solitary flame of the sanctuary's lamp appear to Pierrot's mind: it was its eye, through which it looked keenly, yet mildly upon him; as if to see whether or no he would have heart to do his wicked deed. Whatever spell there is in the human eye to arrest the murderer's stroke, or the savage beast's assault; that same power did this eye of the Sanctuary exercise over his soul; it charmed and fixed him immovable to the spot; not all the promises or threats of earth would have influenced him to attempt a crime so long as it beamed upon him. Nay, to his sight, it was a superhuman intelligence that darted from it; they were rays that penetrated

into his bosom and pried into his heart, that came towards him from it; they had a voice that spoke, they had a point that pierced, though tenderly. However the beams might play around objects beyond and around, and dance and linger on their way, to him they came direct and rigid, and swift as arrows from a bow, cutting through the darkness between, and not enlightening it, but leaving it darkness still. Yes, it seemed to him as an angel's gaze; the look of the heavenly Watchman deputed to keep ward, and pay homage there, during the silent hours of night; the Guardian of the sacred treasure, but whose power was only to madden, to soften, but not to strike or to destroy. And even thus did that light more subdue him and make him coward. Sooner would he have faced, it seemed to him, a seraph brandishing a sword of fire, or angels with scourges in their hands, than this noiseless and harmless protector of the Sanctuary and its treasures. Is not grace about to triumph in him?

This succession of thoughts and feelings in Pierrot's mind, occupied in reality but a few moments; but these were quite enough to tire the patience of his companion, who, though clearly overawed, had not the same associations to work, nor the same heart to be worked on, as Pierrot. He soon broke in on the reverie which held him entranced, and shaking him by the arm, said in a whisper—yes, the ruffian durst not speak, in that light, in a higher tone:

"Come, come, comrade, we are losing time; let us begin."

"I cannot," said Pierrot, in the same voice; "I dare not."

"Nonsense!" gruffly urged the robber; "are you a child? Remember your promise. To work, then, at once."

"I will not," replied his poor victim. "Not for the world will I rob her who here gave me back my daughter, on a night like this."

"And do you wish to murder her on such a night, too?" growled the savage, with set teeth, and the look of a tiger.

"If you will not remember your promise, remember my threat. Ten minutes will take us to your house, and five more will finish our work there. Refuse, and in a quarter of an hour you will be a childless widower."

Pierrot's heart quailed, his heart shuddered and quivered at the thought. The moment of grace was over; the demon had again triumphed, and in the recklessness of despair, he exclaimed:

"Be it so, then; let me accomplish my doom! To work; but not by this light: no, grant me this at least—not by this light."

"Why not?" asked the other. "Is it not enough?"

"Never mind," said Pierrot; "but not by this light. Let it be in total darkness, if you please: that would be better. But rather uncover your dark lantern, that will be best." And as he spoke, he shaded his eyes with his hand, that he might not see the lamp.

The robber, muttering something to the effect, that he too did not like that light much, uncovered his lantern. Its lurid red gleam streaming through the coarse smoked glass appeared at once to contaminate the chaste light that before illuminated the holy place. It was like a stream of blood defiling, on a sudden, a crystal fountain; or the glare of a burning cottage breaking into the summer moonlight. Yet it was comforting to Pierrot, and seemed to dispel his fears. His companion saw it, and cheered him on, saying:

"Come on, we must make up for lost time. I see you do not like that lamp. Ha! ha! we will get rid of it at once. It is silver, I have heard you say; so pull it down, and untie it, while I take down the candlesticks from the altar."

Pierrot had just the same thought. So with desperate resolution, and still shrouding his eyes, he advanced to the lamp, pulled it violently down, and, with one powerful breath, extinguished it.

In the same instant, a shriek rent his ears, so sudden, so sharp, and so full of agony, that it did not seem to proceed from human utterance, but to come from some being of another world. Whether it came from afar or from near, from the sky above, or from the ground below, or from the country around,

neither he nor his companion could tell. For it was instantaneous, and was neither prolonged nor repeated. But so immediately did it follow, or rather accompany, the extinction of the lamp, that both Pierrot and his companion naturally connected the two occurrences together, as cause and effect.

CHAPTER IV.

ITS RE-KINDLING.

"Accende lumen sensibus,
Infunde amorem cordibus."

"Restore Thy light to the fading sight,
And Thy love impart to the fainting heart."

Hymn.

* Her lamp shall not be put out in the night." Prov. xxxi. 18.

The fearful cry which we described at the close of the last chapter, struck terror into the breasts of the sacrilegious robbers. The ruffian leader shook, with affright, from head to foot, his teeth chattered, and the lantern fell from his trembling hand, and was extinguished. Both he and Pierrot rushed to the door and hurried out. There they found their companion equally terrified with themselves.

"Did you hear that?" they both exclaimed.

"Hear it?" said he, with a trembling voice. "Aye, and do not wish, or intend, ever to hear it again. Let us be gone; I will have nothing more to do with robbing churches. I never liked the job much from the beginning."

Both the robbers were now thoroughly alarmed, and fled as quickly as possible towards their homes, leaving Pierrot to shift for himself. His first impulse should have been, to give thanks to God for his own escape from the actual commission of a dreadful crime, and for that of his wife and daughter from the vengeance of his brutal comrades. But fear, as yet froze up every other, and every better feeling, and he only thought of running away from the scene of his wickedness, and finding shelter from the terrible cry which rung in his imagination. Instinctively he took the road towards home, and hurried along it in the dark, as quickly as his trembling knees would allow him. His remorse gave him no peace, and he fancied himself pursued; every howl of the wind in the deep ravine, sounded to him as the voice of an angry multitude in chase of him, every waving branch and quivering bough looked to him as a sword or staff shaken over his head. Yet, still he halted not; but on, on he ran in breathless haste.

He came to the place we have before described, where a gentle slope led up from the wider road to the narrow path skirting the precipice. He ran up it in breathless haste; the grey twilight was just beginning to appear, when by it he saw, standing on the narrow path before him, a wild-looking figure, whose hair and garments streamed to the wind, immovable as the rock that overhung it. He paused and staggered. The words of Scripture which had once terrified him in an eloquent preacher's mouth came to his thoughts. "Fiat via illorum tenebræ et lubricum, et Angelus Domini coarctans eos."* He thought of Balaam stopped by an avenging angel in the narrow path. It seemed to him, as if the same judgment had overtaken him in the most perilous pass. And yet the terror he had left behind him urged him on, and he determined, at all risks, to face any danger before him, so that he might reach his home. He rushed forward at once to the object of his terror, but still it moved not; he stood close to it, and it stirred not. He gazed with mingled terror and anxiety—it was his wife!

There she stood as if bereft of sense and speech, on the very brink of the precipice, looking intently down into its depth. She saw him not, she heeded him not; and even when he had grasped her arm and addressed her by her name, and told her

who he was, she started not, and turned not towards him, but still kept her eyes fixed in the same direction.

"Annette!" he exclaimed, almost distracted with this new sorrow, "what are you looking at? what is there below there, that so rivets your sight and mind?"

She replied not, but only pointed at a white object below.

"What is that?" he again asked: "a white stone? some sheep in the valley?"

"Yes," she replied, and they were her first words: "our own lamb—Marie."

"How?" cried out the wretched man, "what is she doing there?"

At these words her sense seemed to return to the unhappy mother, and turning round, and calmly confronting her husband, she said to him:

"Pierrot you have no doubt forgotten that this night is the seventh anniversary of our dear child's miraculous recovery. This morning we were going to our Sanctuary to pray a while in silence, by the dear light of its lamp, before she put off her white robes. She was tripping lightly and securely before me, when suddenly we lost sight of the light from the lamp; and she naturally thinking (as I should have done had I been first) that it was time to turn, did so, and fell over the precipice. I gave but one shriek, and fell down senseless."

Pierrot felt as if a sword was driven through his heart. In a tone of agony he exclaimed: "I have, then, this night murdered my child! it was I who put out the lamp!" and before his wife could stop him, he had flung himself over the edge of the precipice; and seizing hold of the weak shrubs which grew from its clefts, he let himself down from crag to crag, by a path which the most daring hunter would not have ventured to try. Fragments of rock crumbled from under his feet and rolled down with terrible roar, the bushes crackled and crashed as he tore through them, regardless of bruise or tear; and in a few moments he stood or rather kneeled, by the object at which his wife had pointed.

It was the body of his daughter, lying placid as if asleep, in a soft brake. Not a limb was broken, not a feature discomposed, not a scratch or rent inflicted on her or her garments; the very garland she had borne as an offering was still in her hand, and her white cloak was gathered gracefully around her. The body of St. Catharine, carried by angels to Mount Sinai, could not have been more gently laid down by their hands. For so light and brisk had been her step, that she did not stumble or slip over the perilous edge, but flew over clear of its surface; and life must have been extinct without pain, long before she reached ground below.

Pierrot knelt by her side, for some time, in deep anguish, but in earnest prayer; then taking her in his arms, as reverently as he would have handled a sacred relic, proceeded along the valley, till he came to the same slope which he had ascended, with very different feelings, a few moments before, and returned along the path to the place where he had left his wife. He found her still riveted, as if entranced, to the spot. When he brought his precious burden near her, she shed not a tear, she gave not way to a single expression of womanly grief—her mind seemed absorbed in the consideration of what had occurred, which seemed to her something more mysterious than a mere accident or human event.

She pressed her lips with deep devotion, on the pale, but yet warm, brow of her child, and addressed her husband in these words:

"Pierrot, the words which you just now spoke, are buried forever in the faithful bosom of your wife. But, they have recalled to my mind the words of your prayer just seven years ago, when you begged for your child's life, until some sacrilegious hand extinguished the lamp before the altar. Do you remember?" Pierrot's frame quivered, as he made a sign of assent. She continued: "Then your prayer was heard to the letter; and you have no right to complain.

"But she, too, hath prayed long and earnestly for two favors, and one at least has been granted. She had entreated, not to be permitted to put off the white garments which conse-

* "May their way be dark and slippery, and an Angel of God straiten-
ing them." Ps. xxxiv.

crated her to God and His Blessed Mother, but to be laid in them on her bier. I thought but a few hours ago, that there was no danger of this being granted. But in the hearing of *your* prayer, hers has received its boon. She made another, too, but I know not yet its result."

"What was it?" eagerly asked Pierrot. She replied:

"She offered up the life which she prized so little, as a sacrifice, to obtain your return to grace and virtue."

"Then she *has* been heard," answered with broken sobs, the unhappy Pierrot.

He had scarcely uttered these words, when a bright light darted to the eyes of each, as if a bright star had on a sudden arisen. They looked around in amazement; it was the light of the lamp rekindled in the Sanctuary, and again shining on the narrow and slippery path. Both hailed the omen, or rather the emblem and token of returning grace.

The good priest had been awakened by the cry that had startled the robbers, and had arisen to ascertain its cause. He went first to his chapel, and to his astonishment found it dark. It was some time before he procured a light, and had in that moment relighted the lamp. On finding it drawn down, and still more on perceiving that the door was open, and discovering the lantern on the ground, he saw at once that he had had a narrow escape from sacrilege. How this had been prevented he could not conceive, and he remained examining every place, and pondering on the strange circumstance, when he perceived footsteps approaching. His alarm was changed into grief, when he saw that it was Pierrot and his wife, the former bearing in his arms the dead body of his daughter.

It was long before his sympathising sorrow allowed him to listen to the mother's tale of affliction. She told it at last without mentioning her husband's name, except where she described him as madly rushing down the precipice to recover his child. But the good old man now saw his own, and a no less beautiful, solution of the mysteries of that night than that of the parents, as he said:

"Now I understand it all. Not only has her wish been gratified, of never returning to a worldly garb, but she has proved the guardian and protecting spirit of this her favorite Sanctuary, which she so much adorned. But for that fatal accident to her and the pang it caused her mother the robbers, whoever they were, would have accomplished their work. For, no doubt, the cry which awoke me, scared them. By her death she has saved this holy place from pillage. She was herself as a second Lamp of the Sanctuary; how natural that putting out of one should cause the extinction of the other."

Their plans were soon arranged. A bier was placed in the middle of the church, on the very spot where she loved to kneel, and covered with a black velvet pall. Upon it, facing

the altar, the corpse was placed, in its snow-white spotless dress, the hands with her crucifix placed between them, and her beads twined around them, were joined on the breast; her long silken tresses floated on her shoulders, and the wreath which she herself had twined was placed upon her head.

On either side knelt one of her now broken-hearted parents; but Pierrot soon passed to the knees of the venerable pastor, where he poured forth with deep contrition and burning tears the history of his past crimes, and exchanged the stinging worm of a remorseful conscience, for the tender consolation of loving repentance, and assurance of pardon by the absolution of Christ's minister.

He was again at his former post, kneeling by the body of his child. But now her spirit seemed to him to hover in the soft radiance above him, and to smile upon him in the rays of the sacred lamp. He could imagine it mingling with angelic choirs descending to rejoice over the sinner brought to repentance, and flitting around him, hand in hand with that guardian spirit who had never abandoned him in all his wanderings. And as he looked, to assure himself of the reality of his state, to the bier beside him, it seemed to him as if a new smile had played upon her features, and a tinge of life had returned to her countenance.

Morning was come, and the well-known death-bell sounded from the little turret of the chapel. The neighbors started at its voice, for they had heard of no illness near them, and crowded in kind anxiety to the Sanctuary. They faltered as they entered, in astonishment and sorrow. The tale was soon whispered from one to another; the flight of those naturally suspected of the attempted sacrilege, confirmed all their conjectures, while Pierrot's being with his wife and daughter screened him from suspicion.

Many tears of unaffected sorrow graced that funeral, but shed more in sympathy for the survivors, than from grief over her whom all now envied. Mothers held up their little ones to look upon that corpse; and instead of shrinking from it in terror, they stretched out their arms to ask to embrace it.

There was long in the cemetery of Mont-Marie a grave greener than all the rest, and decked each day by children's hands with the fairest flowers; and if you had asked any of the little laborers whose it was he would have told you with wondering eyes that it was *Marie's*—as if no one else had ever been called there by that name.

After some years there were two other graves near the favorite spot; they were those of her parents, honored by all for virtue and venerable old age. Pierrot left it to be told after his death how his virtue and his happiness, his crimes, his punishment, his repentance, and his forgiveness, had been wonderfully connected with the Lamp of the Sanctuary.

GRANDFATHER KEROUAN.

I NEVER had the happiness of knowing my mother; she died a few hours after my birth. My relatives were all very poor, and my father owed his honorable position in the world entirely to his own talents and industry. After distinguishing himself at the bar by his eloquence, he was, in 1816, elected Attorney-General. Being a widower, and constantly occupied in the duties of his office, he was obliged to entrust me to the care of strangers; but his affection made him wary in the choice of instructors, and the school which sheltered my infancy proved his tender solicitude.

At the age of fourteen I was removed to an establishment for more advanced students, where the sciences were taught and youths prepared for the learned professions.

This house, situated in one of the most beautiful suburbs of Paris, was deservedly celebrated. The terms were high, on account of the first-rate masters who attended, and the domestic arrangements, which were far superior, in point of comfort,

to the generality of schools. It was rather extraordinary that one so poor as myself should be placed in such an establishment, but in this respect my father might, perhaps, have done more than his circumstances warranted, and his love for me was so great that he would, if necessary, have deprived himself of every comfort to give me a complete education. On my arrival I was kindly received and welcomed by a youth of my own age, who frankly offered me his friendship. His countenance was mild and prepossessing, his manners cordial and elegant; and sad as I was at the separation from my father, whom I had been visiting a month, and depressed at the idea of being thrown amongst so many boys so much older than myself, I gratefully and eagerly met his advances. In our youthful years, before distrust chills our affections, a few days intimacy is often sufficient to form a friendship, and Henri, for that was the name of my young companion, soon became very dear to me. My friend had, however, a fault,

trifling, perhaps, in the eyes of some, but in reality one of great importance, since it invariably more or less corrupts the heart of those infected by it.

Henri's besetting sin was vanity, and unfortunately he enjoyed many advantages, which greatly contributed to foster and encourage this fault, nor did he make the slightest effort either to conceal or subdue it. His father was said to be immensely rich, and Henri was more favored than the other pupils.

In addition to the lessons which we shared, he received others from first-class masters, and his purse, always well filled, testified the generosity of his father, as well as the prosperous state of his finances. It must, however, be owned that Henri spent his money nobly. He was always ready to assist the poor of the neighborhood, and to oblige his school-fellows.

In our various conversations, Henri often spoke to me of his prospects; he was astonished, he said, to see his father persist in continuing his trade; and he was still more surprised that he should purchase good farms at high prices rather than some old castle, which would have raised his position in life, and given him importance in society.

Mr. Georges, however, completely disregarded these vain ideas of his son; he was a worthy man, his countenance was intelligent and benevolent, but his figure was extremely vulgar; he was very short, prodigiously stout, and his dress was invariably negligent and badly chosen.

These latter were certainly not the characteristics of a noble chatelain, such as poor Henri would have wished to depict him to our imaginations. Generally, when he visited the school, he was first subjected to the impertinent criticisms of his son, whose attention was invariably directed to the dress of his father, and Henri would often exhaust, in impertinent and foolish remarks, that time which ought to have been delightfully spent in the interchange of mutual affection. The good man would listen to his son with patience, then, with an expression of reproachful pity, he would slightly shrug his shoulders, and abruptly change the conversation.

This improper conduct, on the part of Henri, was so often repeated, that at length it aroused the malicious curiosity of the pupils, and there was a daily deluge of jokes on the unknown trade of Mr. Georges, a trade which all agreed in pronouncing very lucrative, but of which no one could discover the nature; for Henri would endure no raillery on the subject, and roughly silenced every question relative to this delicate point.

Mr. Georges was in the habit of giving an annual fête champêtre, to which he invited all the pupils, without exception, and a happy day it was for us.

Early in the morning our kind host would send carriages to take us to his country house, at Belleville, where a magnificent breakfast awaited our arrival; after a part of the day spent in various games, we had a splendid dinner; the evening concluded with a concert and ball, and the whole was arranged with so much taste and kindness that, for a month at least, the most malicious and discontented could not find the least cause for censure.

For nearly two years I had been the constant companion of Henri, and our friendship had never once been disturbed; for, without the fault I have mentioned, my friend would have been perfect; and yet I did not appreciate him as he deserved.

I had still a long course of study before me, and I was anticipating the enjoyment of my friend's society for at least eighteen months longer, when, one morning, the principal called me into his study; he held in his hand a letter, sealed with black—"My father was dead! and I had not been summoned to receive his last blessing, or hear his last wishes!—I had only some poor relatives, who resided at a distance, and my father had died insolvent; I was a beggar.

I must leave the college before having finished my education; I must renounce all hope of an honorable profession, and endure the misery of a life of poverty, and I was but sixteen!

Overwhelmed with grief, I flew to Henri for consolation,

"Oh! do not weep thus," said he; "depend upon my friendship—your tears break my heart."

At this moment the ringing of the bell announced a visitor. Mr. Georges was in the parlor, and Henri went to him.

A quarter of an hour had scarcely elapsed when I was summoned. On my entrance, Mr. Georges came forward to meet me, and, affectionately embracing me, said: "Young man, I am rich; you shall share as a brother with my son, until you can, yourself, provide for your necessities," and as tears choked my utterance, he again tenderly embraced me, repeating, "I will be your father."

Oh! how noble and beautiful I now thought the countenance which I had so often deemed coarse and vulgar. Kind and worthy man! May God reward him for all the benefits he showered on me; to him I owe a profession which I fondly love; a profession which enables me to defend the widow and protect the orphan.

I remained the brother and intimate friend of my good Henri, but I soon perceived that his unfortunate defect increased with his years, and I was incessantly obliged to remonstrate with him, calling to my aid his reason, and especially his heart, which was still excellent.

For a long period good Mr. Georges seldom came; his manner towards his son became reserved, and occasionally he seemed to have a difficulty in checking expressions of evident disapproval of that odious vanity, which, with all its hideous results, at length became so evident to his eyes; but an entreating look from Henri would make him pause, and the affectionate father seemed to shrink from inflicting humiliation on his son.

One day, as he was bidding Henri farewell, after they had been walking in the college garden, an ignorant and conceited youth, newly arrived at school, inquired who that vulgar old man could possibly be.

Feeling more wounded in his vanity than grieved at this insult to the best of parents, and, yielding to his wicked fault, Henri blushing replied that the man was his father's steward.

In his confusion and anxiety Henri had spoken loudly enough to be heard; good Mr. Georges went away grieved and dejected, and for a whole month he never visited us, but after the expiration of that time all the pupils received an invitation to Bellville.

As usual, there was to be a dinner and ball, and in addition an illumination, to celebrate, as the note expressed, an extraordinary event.

On this occasion our generous host even exceeded his previous kindness and liberality. The whole of his house was placed at our disposal, and every conceivable amusement was procured for us. Henri's vanity was perfectly satisfied with the luxury displayed by his father; twenty times he endeavored to thank him, but Mr. Georges always silently and quickly turned away from him.

After dinner we all assembled in the drawing-room; in the middle was a small table, on which was placed a magnificent ebony box inlaid with silver. Every eye was immediately attracted towards this beautiful object. It had evidently been placed where it was to serve some especial purpose, and our curiosity was greatly excited when Mr. Georges, taking his son's hand, placed him by his side, and spoke as follows:

"You know, my dear young friends, that I have always great pleasure in welcoming you here; you are the companions of my Henri, and this alone would give you a claim to my attention, for you know how I love him.

"On this day he completes his seventeenth year; he is no longer a child, and he ought to be able to make a worthy use of the fortune and title bequeathed to him by his ancestors. This box contains the title deeds of our family, and I wish to deliver them to Henri in your presence. May these precious relics be respected by him, as by myself; and may the banner of our ancestors incite him to imitate their honor and their virtues.

"And now, my dear guests, allow me to relate a short history, which is both instructive and amusing.

"On a cold, gloomy December morning, a poor man left the village of Glomel, in Bretagne, and, pursuing the pathway leading to the mountains, he slowly toiled up the rocky road. Although the cold was excessive, and his clothes were covered with hoar frost, yet the poor man often stopped to wipe his heated brow. It was poor Kerouan, a brave and worthy soldier, who had lost one of his legs in the service of the first republic.

"When the old veteran had reached the mountain top, he rapped with his crutch at the door of a poor cottage. The door was immediately opened, and three boys, of whom the eldest might be about fourteen, threw themselves into the old man's arms.

"'Good morning, grandfather!' they exclaimed in one voice.

"'Good morning, children, good morning.'

"Saying this, Kerouan took the heavy wallet from his back.

"'Alas!' said he in a low voice, 'I am getting very lame, I cannot walk as I used.'

"The old soldier had lived a long time in this cottage with his son Simon, who was a fisherman, his wife and his three children. One sad day poor Simon was lost in a storm at sea, and his wife died of grief.

"The poor children had now no one to provide for them but old Kerouan, and he was without the least resource. The villagers were, however, very kind, and Kerouan accepted their alms for a time, not for himself, but for his poor grandchildren.

"But, as he was very industrious, he was soon able to do without the assistance of others; he brought up the boys honestly, sent them to school, and they soon learned to read and write very nicely.

"When Kerouan was seated, he took off his large round hat, shook the frost from his long white hair, put on an old woollen cap, and dividing into equal portions the bread for breakfast, he spoke thus to his grandsons:

"'My dear children, you are now old enough to gain your livelihood; remember that it is disgraceful to beg, and God only allows it when it is absolutely impossible to do otherwise, for if we beg unnecessarily, we deprive those of bread who are poorer than ourselves.

"'Peter, you are now fourteen, you are strong and healthy, you must work. Charles, you are twelve, you are active, and your eyes are good, you must use them. As for you, my little George, you are only eleven, but you have famous strong legs, you must exercise them.'

"'But what are we to do?' exclaimed the three boys, 'we do not know any one, and we have not been taught any trade.'

"'Listen, my boys; there are many occupations of the poor which interfere with no one; I have hitherto supported you, but I can do so no longer, for I am old and infirm. There are many things lost in the world, because no one thinks of making them useful; but with industry we can derive benefit from all, and I will show you how it is. Thus, I have been enabled to bring you up, and I think you have no reason to complain of me.'

"The boys embraced him tenderly.

"'You shall now see,' added Kerouan, 'what may be accomplished by strict economy; if you can succeed in saving fifteen centimes daily, at the end of the year you will each have amassed thirty-four francs, and in ten years that will amount to five hundred and forty francs.'

"'We will follow your advice, dear grandfather,' said the boys.

"As soon as the severity of the season had passed, Grandfather Kerouan commenced his journey with Peter, Charles and George. He first directed their attention to all the old bones, which had been thrown away as useless. 'Pick them up,' said he, for with the whitest of these bones cutlers and turners make all kinds of articles for their trade, and they are often mistaken for ivory. The discolored bones are sold to gardeners, who use them to fasten their trees to the walls, bone pegs being better than wooden ones. The refuse is sold to be

burnt; and the ashes are used in various arts, and also for manuring land, and it is called animal black.

"'Oh, this is good for nothing,' said Peter, throwing away the broken neck of a bottle, which had nearly cut him.

"'But, pick it up my boy,' said Kerouan, 'pieces of glass are melted, and are bought to mix with new glass, for glass, heated to a certain degree, becomes liquid, like water; it is then put into moulds, or blown, and acquires any desired form.'

"In crossing a wood, they saw some wild cherries and mushrooms. The old soldier taught them to distinguish the good mushrooms from the poisonous ones. 'Never keep those,' said he, 'which change their color when broken, and have an acrid, disagreeable smell. All good mushrooms smell like meal newly ground; one may say that nature, like a good mother, tells us which to take or reject.'

"Peter, Charles and George were soon accustomed to this distinction, and carried to a neighboring market all the mushrooms they had gathered; they also often took thither moss, bouquets of roses, and various herbs useful in medicine. The apothecaries at length employed them to procure the roots they needed, and paid them for their trouble; and the boys carried on their trade with so much industry and honesty, that everyone was anxious to employ them.

"In the winter, they gathered into one large heap dead leaves and withered plants, and sold it for manure to the neighboring farmers.

"Wool left on the hedges by sheep rubbing against the thorns; the hair of cows or oxen, which they chanced to see, was picked up, carefully put on one side, and sold to carpet and mattress makers. They bespoke horse-hair from the neighboring farmers, who, wishing to encourage their industry, frequently gave it to them without charge, and they were enabled to dispose of it very profitably to coach-makers and saddlers. Pigs' bristles were collected and sold to brush-makers; pieces of leather to collar-makers; woollen and linen rags were readily bought by paper-makers. They gathered old horse-shoes, pieces of iron and broken nails, and carried them to the iron founders, who gladly purchased them at their full value. In short, nothing escaped their attention, not even a feather fallen from the wing of a goose, that might serve for a pen, or a morsel of down for a cushion.

"It is easy to see that, in this manner, their profits would increase. Sometimes they chanced to find valuable things that had been lost, then Grandfather Kerouan would employ the town crier, and restore them to their owner.

"Thus the well-known honesty of the whole family gained general esteem.

"When the autumn approached our three boys were very busy collecting wild fruits, with which to make vinegar and other things. Along the roads they gathered brambles and nuts, taking care not to injure the hedges; in the woods they collected roots and acorns, which they sold to feed pigs and turkeys; they filled sacks with horse chestnuts, and took them to the mill to be ground, much to the amusement of the country people, who fancied they were going to eat this bitter and nauseous flour; but our youths let them enjoy their jokes, and sold their chestnut meal to bookbinders and other workmen, who used it in their trade.

"In the winter they employed themselves in destroying injurious animals, such as martens, foxes and wolves, selling the skins to furriers; they also made nets, and caught wild game, and sold it to the neighboring towns.

"With all these various occupations, Kerouan found time to teach them how to make willow baskets and chairs, straw mattresses, and hats, etc.

"The labor of the three boys soon produced more than sufficient for the support of the whole family; their good grandfather could remain at home, and their little cottage could scarcely contain all the various articles they collected and brought there, like little birds when building their nests. By degrees they became well known to persons who purchased from them, and understood the value of their merchandize.

"A little portable shop was then bought and hawked by Peter. His stock consisted of laces, combs, needles, pins, tapes, etc., for the neighboring villages, and this also added to their savings. At the end of the year Grandfather Kerouan opened the money-box, and found that, after all expenses were paid, there would remain 235 francs, 15 centimes. He immediately carried this sum to a merchant in the town, who willingly consented to take the money and give interest for it. "Imagine the joy of our youths; never had they seen such a sum.

"During the following year they succeeded still better; old Kerouan attended to the household concerns, and sold the merchandise collected by his grandsons. At the end of four years they found themselves possessed of 1,200 francs, gained by their industry and labor alone.

"But human nature is weak and frail, and as the three brothers increased in prosperity, so did latent seeds of selfishness spring up in their breasts, causing frequent quarrels, much to the grief of poor Kerouan.

"My children," said he to them one day, as they were sitting round the fire, 'you have now reached the age of manhood; you have gained industrious habits, and enjoy good health, for which you are indebted to temperance and a regular life. Let each of you take two hundred francs, and seek your livelihood in the way most agreeable to you. The remainder of the money shall remain with the banker to whom it is entrusted until we need it, and the interest will every year increase the capital. You have already experienced that, with industry, youth and health, you could support yourselves, even without any money to begin with.'

"The next day the brothers embraced and separated. Peter directed his steps to the East, Charles towards the West, and George to the South.

"Many years passed, and Kerouan heard nothing of his grandsons; he often regretted having sent them from him, but like a good father, he would not touch his children's money. Being, however, attacked by severe illness, he wrote thus to the banker: 'I am very ill; for several years I have not received any tidings of my grandsons; they are, doubtless, dead, and I feel that I shall follow them.'

"The banker replied: 'I return you your money, you are rich, for your capital has increased by degrees, and now exceeds 4,500 francs.'

"But the old soldier was sad and dejected; every day he wished for death. 'Alas!' said he, 'I shall have no one to close my eyes. Oh! that I had my little George with me, he would support and console my old age!' But Kerouan did not die.

"On a lovely Sunday evening in summer, the old soldier was seated under a tree, chatting sorrowfully to some neighbors about his children, when a servant in handsome livery

approached, and inquired whether Baptiste Kerouan lived in the village.

"He is here!" exclaimed several voices, and on looking round they perceived a carriage stopping before the door of the old man's cottage; three young men stepped out, and, hastening to the old soldier, embraced him tenderly.

"My father! my father! do you not know us again," said they.

"I am Peter, your eldest son; I have a large silk factory at Lyons.'

"And I," said the second, 'am Charles, I am a corn merchant at Corbeil.'

"And I," said the youngest, 'am George, your cherished child, I am richer than my brothers, and have gained great wealth in Paris as a wholesale rag merchant. I have come to fetch you, my dear father, and I have a dear wife who will take care of you. We will both love you.'

"The poor old soldier burst into tears of joy. He raised his hands and blessed his grandchildren.

"It is to you alone," exclaimed they, 'we owe all our happiness. If you had not taught us to pick up and turn to profit, wild fruit, feathers, and rags, we should now be beggars.'

After this recital Mr. Georges paused.

"And now," continued he, after some minutes' silence, "my dear Henri, open this box and look."

Henry slowly advanced to the ebony box, opened it with trembling hands, and drew out—a greasy and worn linen wallet.

"Behold," said Mr. Georges, with a mischievous smile, "the banner of your ancestor, the good man Kerouan, for I am his youngest grandson, George, the rag merchant."

Poor Henri's brow crimsoned with confusion, and his father added:

"Remember, my son, that vanity is the appendage of folly; no one ought to blush at any condition of fortune or birth which he cannot control. He who is rich ought to consider himself the debtor of the poor and assist them whenever an opportunity presents itself; that alone is true superiority.

Henri, with tears in his eyes and repentance in his heart, threw himself into the arms of Mr. Georges.

"This lesson has been severe, my father," said he, "but I have deserved it; be sure it shall never be forgotten."

I can assure my readers that Henri kept his promise. Retired from business, he and his father live upon the most affectionate terms, and their house is the rendezvous of artists and men of letters. Henri pursued the surest method of correcting the vanity which his wealth might have fostered, and that was frequently to repeat during desert the history of Grandfather Kerouan.

THE GOLDEN PHEASANT.

ON the Eve of Saint Lawrence, in the year 1719, there was held high festival in the ancient Hall of Montbard, a small village in Burgundy.

This beautiful residence was the country seat of Counsellor Leclerc, who had, for a few weeks, withdrawn from his parliamentary duties at Dijon, that he might spend, at his favorite Montbard, the feast of his patron, Saint Lawrence, and also enjoy the mirth of a large party of young guests, whom he had invited thither, to welcome home his only son George from school.

The old Hall rung with the sound of twenty merry voices; nothing was heard from the top of the house to the bottom, from one end of the garden to the other, but jokes and joyous laughter. The relatives of the party, bewildered with the uproar, were occasionally displeased; but they soon forgave the merry offenders, and the joyous tumult was redoubled.

Yet in the midst of this turbulent excitement, the happiness

of George was of a calmer character; he appeared grave, and even thoughtful, and with an absent air would frequently wander away from his companions, to the most distant extremity of the garden. There, screened from the grounds by a thick yew tree hedge, was a large flower bed.

The air was redolent with a thousand sweet odors, and plants of every hue and species were flourishing in rich luxuriance. Arrived at this enchanting spot, George soon became absorbed in attentions to the brilliant colony.

If he perceived a poor plant hanging its head to the earth, as if confiding its sufferings to the common mother of vegetation, he gently raised it, gave it water, or freed it from injurious insects. Sometimes, with much apparent wisdom and gravity, our hero would select some plant, perhaps the youngest and most beautiful of all, and with a sudden blow, cut it down, by the side of its blooming companions, who had, but a moment before, surrounded it and incensed it as a queen;

then picking it up, and tearing it slowly to pieces, he appeared as though he sought to discover some interesting secret under each cicatrice and membrane.

The frequent absence of George at length aroused the attention of his young friends. The most inquisitive proposed to follow and discover the indefatigable deserter.

This proposal was received with general assent, and each executed his part of the plot so cleverly, that George suddenly saw himself surrounded, questioned, and even ridiculed, just at the moment when, kneeling before a rose tree, he was gazing intently at a notch he had made with his knife in one of its branches.

"Oh, George!" exclaimed a pretty little girl, "are there any bonbons hid in these trees? If you find any, do give me some."

"Perhaps it is a magic lantern you are looking at through that large hole," said a young boy.

"Have you seen the sun, do you see the moon?" shouted a third.

And bursts of merry laughter resounded from the group. George, humbled but for a moment, arose, and replying to their raillery, in a short and contemptuous tone said:

"I shall not tell you what I have been looking for here, nor what I have found, because you could not understand me. You, young ladies, eat your bonbons; and you young gentlemen, admire your magic lantern."

"Flowers," replied the orator of the band, "are certainly very pretty, and smell sweetly, but their society is rather stupid."

George's face flushed with anger, and he hastily exclaimed, "Stupid! Dare not to speak thus of benevolent and industrious nature, the admirable servant of God—to whom you are indebted for that long fair hair that shelters you from cold, and of which you are so proud. He who has given you —"

"Oh! of course, I thank God for his gifts, and admire the wonders of his Providence, but in regard to these plants——"

"Well! is not every living, breathing thing under His control?"

"What!" exclaimed a young girl, in the greatest astonishment, "do plants breathe; and are they fed like us?"

"Yes, my dear Emma, they have a food which is proper for them, and suitable organs to receive it."

"Have you seen them eat?"

"No; but I read in a beautiful book, that gives the history of flowers and animals, that it was so; I doubted it, but I tried it and found it out."

"But," continued the incredulous girl, "how did you find it out that the book was true?"

"Ah! that cost me much thought," replied George, proudly. "I reflected on it for more than a fortnight, and now I hope to receive the fruit of my——"

Here the boy was at a loss to find a word sufficiently sonorous, to increase his importance by brilliancy of language.

"Meditations," suggested a poet in embryo, who had gained the first prize in orthography.

"Meditations—yes."

"Oh, tell us how you found it out."

"Yes! do, do!" exclaimed the children in chorus.

"No, no," replied George, "it would not amuse you like the magic lantern, and my experiment is not so good as a box of bonbons."

It was very evident that George was wounded by the raillery of his companions. Alas! that superiority should be so often sullied by pride! It is the thorn on the rose, the smoke that obscures the brilliant flame. Remember, my dear readers, should you, in future years, attain an elevated rank in science, art, or literature; remember that a modest great man is doubly great. This may be said without casting the slightest slur on the character displayed, later in life, by the man of genius, whom we have chosen for the hero of our tale. Let us now return to our young friends.

George was entreated, praised, caressed, and he at length consented to reveal the secret, which he had been burning with a desire to impart. Commencing in a dictatorial tone, he said:

"I have told you that plants are fed. You will say that, in such case, they must have mouths, and that you have never seen them."

"No, indeed, never."

"And you will not make us believe they have any."

"I will do more, my dear friends; I will show them to you."

"What! will you pretend to show that this rose tree, you just now cut, has a mouth?"

"Perhaps he will, next Easter or Trinity," said the poet.

"This very moment," replied George, "I will show you that this rose tree has not one mouth, but a thousand."

"Well, we are impatient to see the wonder," said a little girl, in a sneering tone.

Young Leclerc tore up the little rose tree, and pointing to that part of the stem which had been in the ground, continued:

"You see this sort of tuft, composed of filaments or threads; each of these acts like a pump, and supplies the plant with necessary nourishment; and these I call the mouths of plants."

A murmur of admiration ran through the circle surrounding George.

"But still," said a young logician, "you must prove this."

"Certainly," continued George, "and now I come to the experiment, which has cost me so much—meditation; you shall all judge whether I have succeeded."

Every head was bent forward in an attitude of the deepest attention, as George raised his voice, and continued:

"The water which is poured on plants mixes with substances immediately surrounding them, and is absorbed by the roots. I selected two plants exactly alike, but placed at a sufficient distance. Around one I poured a red liquid, the remainder of which you see in this bottle; around the other plant I poured pure water. We will now open the two stems, and if we see any difference between them, or any sign revealing the presence of the red liquid in one, I shall have reason to be satisfied, and you also."

Then George, with great gravity and trembling hands, took the first plant and broke it; two or three limpid, transparent drops oozed from the stem.* The second plant shared the same fate, but this time George's fingers were slightly stained. He pressed the two extremities of the stem, and from each dropped a rosy pearl.

A frenzied hurrah rewarded this discovery.

It was proved that plants take their meals.

George turned pale, emotion choked his utterance, but had his power to speak been equal to his desire, all attempts to obtain a hearing would have been in vain. The questions, exclamations, and cries of admiration of his friends would have drowned even the long-wished-for sound of the large dinner-bell, had not a little incident occurred which at once changed the course of their young imaginations, attracted, as they had been for a moment by the irresistible spell of science.

Mr. Leclerc's gamekeeper was seen at this moment passing the hedge, which we have before said screened the flower-bed. He was carrying something under his blouse, which he appeared most anxious to conceal; his attempt, however, was unsuccessful, for beneath his vestment was seen a magnificent plume of feathers, in which appeared red and gold mingled with bright blue.

In an instant the old man was surrounded by the children, and George himself was led on by the general impulse.

* THE SAP.—In order that plants may be nourished, food is required. This food, in a crude state, enters the roots by a process of absorption or imbibition; it is then transmitted from one part of the plant to another; by means of the circulation or progressive movement of the sap, it reaches the leaves, and is there submitted to the action of light and air, which constitutes the function of respiration; and thus the fluids are finally fitted for the process of assimilation, and form various vegetable products and secretions.—BALFOUR'S BOTANY.

"Dear Gerald, show us what you have got there.—Look! look at the beautiful plume.—No, it is the tale of a bird.—Oh! how large and handsome it must be!" Such were the exclamations on all sides.

The poor man, stupefied with the noise, vainly sought to stop both his ears with one hand, the other being occupied with the burden that caused such excitement.

"Silence! don't clatter like so many magpies," said he; "it is a surprise I have contrived for my master. So let me go on my way."

"No, indeed, no one passes thus over our ground without paying a fine.—We sentence you to show us your treasure. The fine! the fine! or you shall not pass here."

And twenty little hands, like crab-claws, seized the legs and arms of the unfortunate keeper, who saw at once that he was caught in a trap, from which there would be no release but by concession.

"Well, children, since you will have it so," replied he, "if you will promise to restrain your tongues until supper, for there my present will shine, I will gratify your curiosity."

"We all promise, good Gerald—you may be satisfied—we will swear it, if you like—on your head."

The keeper drew from beneath his blouse a bird nearly as large as a cock, the magnificent plumage of which elicited loud bursts of admiration. Its head, of a shining ash color, was surmounted by a little helmet of feathers, its neck was covered with beautiful green feathers, and the rest of the body with silky brown. The tail of the bird shone like a water-spout gilded by the sun.

"What a beautiful parrot!" exclaimed the little girl, who had before displayed her simplicity.

"Foolish child," replied a little boy, who, quite as ignorant, had better have remained silent; "it is a peacock."

"You don't know what you are talking about," added a third, "I have seen one before in the Duke's park."

"Well, then, what is the name of the bird?"

Every eye turned instinctively towards George.

The latter went to the keeper with affected indifference, took the bird, and examined it for some time with great attention; at length he said:—

"If the engravings in my book are correct, this bird is a golden pheasant. It was first seen on the banks of the Phasis,* from whence it derives its name."

"Bravo!" exclaimed Gerald, "my young master has at once told you the right name of the bird. I don't, however, know whether the first pheasant was found on a *vase*; I never heard so before. However, be this as it may, I have killed this bird with my own hands to surprise my master; game is scarce here, and to-morrow is the feast of St. Lawrence, so I shall take it to Martha, who will, I hope, make a beautiful roast of it."

The children followed him into the kitchen, that they might continue to admire the beautiful bird, so mercilessly condemned to the spit."

Great was the joy of Martha at the sight of such a delicate morsel. It was a delightful opportunity for her to practise all the secrets of the culinary art, secrets which she flattered herself she thoroughly possessed. In her joy she embraced old Gerald, and even the pheasant, who was utterly unconscious of the honor.

"Well," said the keeper, delighted at his first success, "I killed the bird at the first shot; you must now cook it in your best style, and our master will be satisfied. But I say, Martha, do you remember the pike last year?"

"Ah! my poor pike," sighed Martha. "I have regretted it ever since. I should have made a capital dish of it. Only imagine, children, to keep it fresh I put it in ice. When I wanted to cook it, I found the ice broken—"

"And the pike also," said Gerald, laughing.

The children joined in his merriment.

"Yes," replied Martha, "broken, gone, anything you like, and I have never heard anything of it to this day."

And the poor cook mournfully took an enormous pinch of snuff.

"Well, take good care this time," said the keeper, "that my pheasant does not fly away. Ha! ha!"

"Be quite easy, Gerald, the devil is very sly and malicious, but he shan't trick me to-day. This lock will answer for your game, and the key shall never leave my pocket."

After laughing heartily at the adventure, the children resumed their games.

The day appeared as if it would terminate without any other incident, when, towards the end of the afternoon, Martha made a sudden irruption into the room, where all were assembled.

Exclamations of surprise welcomed this apparition, and truly the appearance of the good woman justified the universal astonishment.

Her cap only covered one side of her head, over which it was entirely flattened. Her eyes rolled like billiard balls, and her long chin shook like the pendulum of a clock. In one hand she held a basting spoon, and in the other her empty snuff-box.

"Madam," said she, in an agitated voice, to the mistress of the house, "I am come to take my leave of you."

"What! leave us, Martha, after being with us fifteen years? What has happened?"

"Ah! Madam, during the whole fifteen years I have lived in your house, I have never seen such a thing."

"Well, what have you seen?"

"I have seen—why, I have seen nothing at all! so that makes the thing so frightful, so incredible, I can't understand it."

This scene, although so ridiculous, excited pity; everyone thought poor Martha deranged.

"Come, come, my poor Martha," said Madame Leclerc, "try to recollect yourself, and tell me clearly what has happened."

"Nothing has happened to me, Madam, but something happens to everything that comes into my kitchen, and I warn you that your house is bewitched."

"What nonsense you are talking."

"Madam, was the disappearance of the pike last year nonsense?"

"Well! has it come back again?"

"No, but the pheasant has gone to join it."

"The pheasant!"

"Yes, Madam, a pheasant which old Gerald shot; and as the bird was intended to be sent to table, in honor of Saint Lawrence, I prudently shut it up in the large closet. When I wanted to cook the bird, I unlocked the door, and—it was gone."

"Oh, is that all?" said Madame Leclerc, "what a noise about a trifle! A dog has carried off the game; there is the end of the mystery."

"But to do that," said Martha, drawing an imaginary pinch from her empty box, "the dog must have got through the key-hole, for the closet was locked, the key has been in my pocket, and I have never left the kitchen."

If the children had not seen Martha lock up the bird and take the key, no one would have believed her tale; but as it was, everyone went to look at the mysterious closet.

The door was opened and shut twenty times, the lock carefully examined, every corner of the kitchen rigidly investigated, all the dogs summoned, but without the slightest sign or trace of the truth being discovered.

"It must be the devil," said Martha, "God protect us!"

Madame Leclerc had great difficulty in reassuring her old cook; everyone explained the matter according to his own idea; no one believed the opinion of his neighbor, and all separated in the evening completely puzzled.

The mystery was not explained until thirty years had elapsed. During that time George had seen the doors of the French Academy unfold before his genius. The oration which he pronounced on his entrance has been, and ever will be, remarkable amongst academical harangues.

* Or Fox, a river in Asia, running through Mingrelia.

When we speak of George Leclerc as being the author of the most beautiful work on natural history which we possess, as the founder of the *Jardin des Plantes*, our reader will at once recognize him as the Count de Buffon, a name deservedly celebrated throughout Europe.

Thirty years after the loss of the pheasant, the learned academician owned himself the guilty cause of poor Martha's

grief and terror, for, anxious to observe, at his leisure, the beauties and form of the bird, he had profited by the moment when the cook was taking her daily nap before the fire to steal her key and run off with the golden pheasant.

He said nothing of the pike, but we are quite willing to believe that little George was equally desirous to possess himself of it.

MATTHEW SCHINNER.

CHAPTER I.

A SCHOLAR OF THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY.

TOWARDS the end of the month of December, 1484, a little country boy, about fourteen years of age, entered the city of Berne, in Switzerland. His clothes were covered with snow, his naked feet were stained with blood; cold, fatigue, and hunger had left their traces on his pale face.

But although his clothes were ragged, his carriage was dignified, his figure was neat and well-made, and his eyes were full of vivacity and intelligence. After having wandered some time in the streets, he perceived the cathedral, which he immediately entered, and was soon absorbed in prayer.

It was dark when he left the ancient and stately church, and the few passers-by were hastening to their homes.

Seeing himself alone, without home or friends, without money, in the deserted streets, the poor boy began to weep; his courage abandoned him. To protect himself from the north-east wind and blinding snow, he took refuge in the angle of a door-way, and there, weakened by hunger, shivering under a freezing sky, he crouched down, murmuring a prayer, and would have died a miserable death, if a poor woman who lived in the house had not opened the door on hearing his moans.

"Holy Virgin!" exclaimed she, "it is a child, and a pretty one too!"

She assisted him to rise, and taking his arm, led him into her humble dwelling. The boy, benumbed and half stupefied with cold, had not strength to thank his benefactress, and she felt unwilling to question him in that condition. To stir up the fire, seat the young boy near the chimney, and give him some food, which he ate with avidity, was for the good woman the work of a moment. But when her little protégé, revived by the warmth, and refreshed by food, looked at her with eyes full of tears of joy and gratitude,

"God be praised," said she, "he is saved!"

Then, embracing him with all the tenderness of a mother, she said:

"Now tell me how it happened I found you deserted in the streets. You are certainly not of this country. Have you no relatives? Have you no one to take care of you?"

"Alas! no, good and kind mother. My name is Matthew Schinner, and I was born at Sions, in Haut Calais, twenty leagues from hence. After the death of my parents, (poor and worthy people, may they rest in peace,) I was taken care of and educated by the curé of our parish. And now, as I have been fortunate enough to profit by his lessons, I have come to complete my studies at Berne. I have heard that there are at this university celebrated professors, and, perhaps, by ceaseless labor, I also may become learned."

"Hum! hum! These scholars have fine ideas! Our soldiers, who have performed their duty so well at Granson and Murat, did not know their alphabet, and yet the powerful Duke of Burgundy was obliged to fly before them. But no one now knows what he would invent. It appears that the Germans have discovered at Mayence the Art of Printing, as they call it; I hope it may not be an invention of the devil!" The good woman made the sign of the cross, then taking the hand of her young guest—

"How did you travel so far as this, my poor little one?"

"On foot and asking alms, my good mother. The shepherds on the mountains allowed me to sleep in their huts, and no one ever refused me a bowl of milk and a piece of bread; but I am very much afraid,"—added the boy, sighing deeply, "that the inhabitants of large towns—"

"Come, come, little ungrateful one, be silent, there are good people everywhere. I am not rich, so much the worse; but I will never abandon any of God's creatures who have need of me. Remain here, then, my child, until you can find a better home; we will share our daily bread."

This proposal was accepted with the greatest gratitude.

The joy of Jane (that was the name of Matthew's protectress) was almost as great as his own. This poor woman, so isolated, without either family or friends, living by her labor from day to day, was glad to attach herself to an orphan. It is amongst those who suffer that misfortune most frequently finds cordial and spontaneous assistance. Jane became the adopted mother of the little wanderer, and lavished on him all her long-restrained affection. On his part, Matthew was not ungrateful; indeed no gratitude could be more ardent, more attentive, or more delicate. On Sundays he accompanied Jane to divine service, and afterwards in her walks on the banks of the Aar; on other days he never went out except to the university; and as soon as his studies were finished he returned home. Reading and writing, day and night, he still found time to assist his adopted mother in her household labors. In the evening, seated by the fireside, he talked to her enthusiastically of science, the mistress of the world, and related to her his ambitious dreams for the future.

The good woman sometimes shook her head, saying that the Holy Scriptures ought to be sufficient for a Christian; but Matthew read to her such beautiful histories, translated from the Latin and Italian, that she at length became reconciled to profane authors. She embraced her dear son, and encouraged him with a sweet smile to persevere in his labors.

This peaceful and laborious life was, however, sometimes clouded by misery. Jane's spinning wheel supported both herself and the student; but when work failed, the bread chest became empty. Then Matthew, at the close of his day's study, would go to beg in the streets, and frequently returned with his purse well supplied. His appearance was so neat and gentle, that no one refused his modest petition.

At the period of time of which we are writing, there was nothing disgraceful in this kind of mendicity. For a long time, knowledge could only be obtained by great industry and privations, and the poor students who had not a fellowship in a college were obliged to have recourse to public benevolence, in order to continue their studies, and procure a subsistence.

After studying four years in the university of Berne, Matthew, whose desire for knowledge was insatiable, determined, notwithstanding his great affection for his adopted mother, to go to Italy, where the arts and belles-lettres had received new encouragement and cultivation since the arrival there of the Greek savants, who had been driven from Constantinople by Mohammed II.

Great was the grief of Jane on learning this resolution; what would become of her without her little Matthew? He also hesitated to separate himself from his benefactress, but his affection for her was conquered by his love of knowledge.

"Adieu, my dear mother," said the young student, tenderly wiping the tears from her cheeks; "I shall never forget you, and if God grants me life, I will soon see you again; but then I hope to be rich and powerful."

"Be always a good man, dear child," replied Jane, "that is my ambition."

She accompanied Matthew some distance from the town, and when at length he left her, she watched his receding figure until distance hid him from her sight; then, weeping bitterly, she returned home, and for many days her cottage appeared her more dreary, and her poverty harder to endure.

CHAPTER II.

THE CARDINAL OF SION'S DINNER.

Several years after, on a beautiful spring day, the good city of Berne presented a noisy and animated spectacle, which contrasted singularly with its usual calm. The streets were filled with an immense crowd; countrymen and citizens, laborers and noble lords, were all clothed in their holiday garb.

The cause of this unaccustomed agitation was the arrival of the celebrated Cardinal of Sion, who had been sent, by Pope Julius the Second, as legate extraordinary into Switzerland.

This high dignity of the Church enjoyed great influence at Rome, and actively seconded the policy of the Sovereign Pontiff. The Bernese, therefore, offered him a reception, worthy, not only of himself, but of the Holy See, which he represented. The clergy, the senate, the university, and the corporation, went in great pomp to meet the prelate, and conducted him, with great respect, to the palace, which had been splendidly decorated for his reception.

The first magistrate of Berne would not yield to anyone the honor of entertaining such an illustrious guest, and invited the principal inhabitants of the city to dine at his mansion with the legate. The Cardinal, in order to show his gratitude for the kind welcome he had received, invited all the nobles who were then present to a grand banquet on the following day.

At daybreak on the morrow, the major-domo of his Eminence was seen to pass hastily down a narrow street, which the prelate had pointed out to him, and rap at the door of a very poor house. Workmen of all kinds accompanied him.

An old woman opened the door, complaining bitterly that she had been disturbed so early.

"What do you desire, sir?" said she, greatly confused at speaking to a person so richly dressed.

"His Eminence, the illustrious Cardinal of Sion," replied the steward, "intends to dine at your house to-day, with all the nobles and magistrates of the city. It is a great honor for you, my good woman; but you must understand that so many noble lords cannot be entertained in such a humble dwelling. I have orders, therefore, to prepare for their proper reception. Come men," added he, "to your work, time presses."

Immediately, disregarding the cries, complaints, and exclamations of the old woman, who could not comprehend this extraordinary caprice of the Cardinal, the workmen began their labor. They knocked down the partitions, removed the furniture to a neighboring granary, and formed in a few hours the whole of the house into one large hall, which they hung with beautiful tapestry, and then prepared the banquet.

About noon, (for in the sixteenth century, people dined at that hour) the Cardinal of Sion left his palace, followed by his gentlemen, the magistrates, and the nobles of Berne. The preparations for the banquet, executed by the major-domo in so unusual a manner, had excited the public curiosity to the highest pitch. The streets were crowded with people, and regardless of the respect due to the ambassador of the Pope, more than one citizen had not hesitated to say, that his Eminence did not appear in the perfect enjoyment of his senses. The astonishment of the noble cortege was extreme when they saw the Cardinal direct his steps towards the poorest quarter of the town. Every one thought him mistaken, and the Mayor ventured to address to him a very humble remonstrance; but the Cardinal interrupted him, saying, with a smile:—

"I know the city as well as you do, and I beg you will believe that I also know whither I am leading my guests."

Having arrived at the little cottage, from which his steward had expelled the poor woman in such an expeditious manner, the Cardinal stopped, and deep emotion was depicted on his countenance. Unbroken silence reigned in the crowd; they awaited some unexpected occurrence; they were at last to learn the great secret, the object of so many comments!

The legate, who appeared to seek some one, and whose emotion momentarily increased, invited his guests by a gesture to follow him into this novel banquet hall, when a cry of joy and astonishment was heard, and the old woman of the house, rushing from the midst of a group standing near the door, flew towards the Cardinal, exclaiming:

"My little Matthew! My Matthew Schinner! I shall become mad with joy."

Great was the astonishment of the crowd, when this great dignity of the Church, after embracing the poor woman, turned with tearful eyes to his noble guests, and said:

"Noble lords, this is my mother, you will dine with her to-day."

Jane (our reader will have recognised the adopted mother of the little student of Berne), confused at her audacity, threw herself at his feet; but the Cardinal kindly raised her, and offering his arm, led her, amongst the acclamations of the crowd, into that house where so much of his youth had been spent.

At table he placed her at his right hand, called her mother, and begged that she would as formerly give him the simple name of Matthew. At length, to satisfy the curiosity of his guests, the illustrious prelate related to them how the good old woman had received him, when a poor child wandering in the streets of Berne. He added that he had never forgotten her maternal care, and that constant labor had prevented him visiting her before. But being made Cardinal of Sion (it was as we know his birth-place), and sent into Switzerland as legate of the Pope, he had hastened to Berne to see his adopted mother.

"And now, Jane," said the Cardinal, embracing her tenderly, "was I not right when I told you that with education nothing is impossible to man?"

On his departure he left her his furniture and the plate which had been used at the feast, and settled on her an annual pension of fifty ducats, which was a large fortune at that period.

Jane lived many years happy and respected, relating to strangers how she had the honor of dining in her own house with the Cardinal of Sion.

LYDIA.

AN INTERESTING TALE OF THE SECOND CENTURY.

PREFACE.

How beautiful to behold the silent dawn of morning, lighting up the solitary summits of the Glæchers. Height after height begins to wear the first beams of the rising sun. While the bases of these mighty mountains are hidden from the view, by a thick veil of blue mist, naught appears but their lofty heads peeping, as it were, from amongst the clouds. A similar spectacle discloses itself to the eye of Faith, when it casts a glance into the golden morning of Christianity, and discovers those gigantic heads surrounded by the brilliancy of the Sun of Justice. An invigorating air wafts across from them to us, upon our remote point of view; we are astonished at the characters, firm as a rock, which raised them above their cotemporaries, and imagine we hear the blood gushing from their hearts, and falling into the stream of the general martyrdom. This stream flowed on for three hundred years, and formed the boundaries between the heathen and the Christian world. Such a look as this, did the writer of these pages cast into that golden age. But as the succession of these great men stretches out, like a lengthened chain of precious gems, he drew for his purpose a more confined perspective, and chose that period, in which the Emperor Marcus Aurelius wielded the sceptre. This period embraces about twenty years—from A. D. 161 to 180; the most renowned heroes of the Faith, which occur in this time, are St. Polycarp of Smyrna, the Philosopher Justin of Rome, and the Apostle of the south of Gaul, Bishop Pothinus.

The martyrologies that mention these men are, above all others that have come under our notice, the most to be relied on. The untiring Irenæus is a connecting link between the Eastern and Western Churches. Pope Soter in Rome, Dionysius of Corinth, and the learned Athenagoras, who, from a follower of the Grecian philosophy became a disciple of Christ, lived also in the time of Marcus Aurelius. But in order to bring these professors of the Faith, who with respect to place, are so widely separated from each other, into the same compass, it requires the personality of one, whose trials were cotemporary with the above mentioned men, like the veil of mist that obscures the depths of the valley, and scatters itself round the foot of the mountain. This person is Lydia, an Eastern slave. Some difficulty occurred at the question, in which of the numerous cities of the then kingdom of the world, the connecting points of the tale should lie.

Rome, the chief city of the immeasurable empire, would have been above all others, the one most suited, and it dares not be forgotten. But, the seat of refinement and the asylum of worldly wisdom, were to be found at that time, neither in Rome nor in Italy, but in that once great city of Greece, Athens.

In the time of the Anthonys, the imperial court at Rome so highly appreciated the Hellenish refinement, that the best teachers were called from Greece to instruct the heirs to the throne, and the higher schools. Everything that laid claim to refinement was from Greece, just as with us, the French language has become the mother-tongue of high life. Marcus Aurelius was himself a disciple of the Grecian school of philosophy, and wrote his "Maxims" in Greek. Herodes, Atticus, Demonax, Athenagoras, Aristides, Lucien, Pausanias, and other illustrious writers,

we find in Athens at this time. For the propagation of Christianity, Greece was looked upon with as much importance as Italy: in the latter, politics had their seat, in the former, spiritual power; and for this reason, the princes of the Apostles chose both these countries for their missionary labors. The courageous Peter ventured to remain in the imperial city, but the learned Paul journeyed to Greece. Therefore is Athens chosen as the scene of the incidents.

The Hellenish worship may excite some interest, as it explains itself in a heathen sense. There is a great chasm between Roman and Grecian paganism, and incomparably nobler were the religious views of the new Platonic schools, than the coarse faith of the Romans. The researches of the Greek sages were not fruitless; various as were their systems, they were at least all united in the same opinion, that the perception, which the people of the earth then had of the Divinity, was unworthy of it. In addition to this, the Grecian Mysteries, which could be traced as far back as to the primitive history of the people, preserved their ancient faith; and perhaps after this, it was the Eleusian Mysteries that saved those remnants of past knowledge which may be looked upon with justice, as a divine revelation. But apart from those most important mysteries, into which almost all those who had any pretensions to refinement were initiated, there flowed in the principal Greek towns, another source which assisted in altering the ideas of inferior paganism, and in showing in purity the image of the Divinity. There were not only communities of Jews at that time in Delos, Kos, Milet, and other islands, but their religion was practised in the great Corinth, also; and St. Paul found a synagogue even in Athens.* Who would therefore doubt, that just the most renowned Grecian thinkers and teachers of the people, have not drawn from this source?

All this philosophy then, this Judaism, and those mysteries, had worked together, in cutting off, piece by piece, this Anacconda of paganism, which bound up the Roman world, until that "Sun-clad Woman," stepped forth from the house of David, and for ever crushed the serpent's head.

The most remarkable events of Marcus Aurelius' time have not been passed over, particularly the war against the people of the Danube, which for each descendant of the ancient Germans, is of no small importance, and is circumstantially described; whereby much of their ancient manners and customs, according to Tacitus, have been made known to us.

It is now some years since Lydia began to tread the insecure path of publicity. In her wanderings she has been nowhere received with coldness; in many places, greeted most warmly, and in all, treated with that consideration due to her sex.

Unhappy, persecuted Poland gladly availed herself of her consoling presence, and looked upon her as a suffering sister in the Faith. The maid, the wife, the mother and the widow, have been alike instructed by her good example. The desolate and afflicted have found in her all they could desire; for while her generous hand dispensed a temporal blessing, it was ever accompanied by a word of consolation and advice.

Thus Lydia ventures, with timidity, 'tis true, to place her foot on foreign soil. Do not discourage her by a cold reception. She comes not in the train of Discord but of Peace.

* Acts of the Apostles xvii. 17.

CHAPTER I.
THE YOUTHFUL CAPTIVE.

A. D. 165.

THE confused cries and clamors of a thronging multitude fill the slave market of ancient Smyrna. In one part an overseer screams himself hoarse upon the superior qualities of his merchandise, whilst another of his caste beats poor children most unmercifully, and the sobs and whinings of these unhappy ones mingle with the imprecations of their castigator.

Each one set up for sale has a placard suspended from his neck, on which all his qualities are written. On many of these can be seen the words "Calligraphos" or "Pedagogos," because the wearer possesses the necessary acquirements for either a Tutor or a Teacher. The upper end of the market is occupied chiefly by Africans, from burning Lybia, with dark skin and woolly hair; deplorable creatures! their ears pierced, and their feet chalked—a sign that they have crossed the sea. Close to these, cooped up in laths and cords are young Negresses, from the interior of Ethiopia—black as ebony. They seat themselves on a checkered carpet, crouching closely and anxiously together. Bread, fruit and wine are placed before them, but few partake thereof, as they were told that those good things are merely given them for a time, to make them robust, that they may afford the gormandizing Romans a dainty meal. At the lower end the eye falls upon entire herds of white slaves, from every known country under the sun. Amongst these are the emaciated Isaurians, formerly pirates in the Mediterranean, looking most piteously. In striking contrast stands the athletic Cappadocian, proud of his race and stature; frivolous and faithless 'tis true, but as his placard jestingly remarks: as the bearer of a litter, most useful, and as well beloved as the horses of his country. In the midst of this multitude of slaves, of Greeks richly appressed, and of Romans eager for purchase, might be seen passing on, a modestly attired female, of noble bearing, but whose dress, that of a widow, bespeaks her of the middle class. Her scrutinizing gaze lingers long upon the youthful forms of the captive Christians—but she finds not whom she seeks, and wanders on by the nearest way to the public prisons. "Shall I rejoice, or shall I complain," sighed the afflicted one, "that I found her not amongst them, or whether, after six months, is she still in prison, or have they reserved her for the coming festival?" Merciful God! suffer not my child to be torn to pieces by wild beasts, amidst the jeers and scoffs of an applauding multitude! Agonized with such thoughts, Charitana reached the gates of the prison, knocked with trembling hand, and craved admittance. She informed the jailer, that she was in search of a daughter, named Seraphica, who, immediately after the execution of Polycarp, had been cast into prison: and that for several months she had heard nothing of her fate.

"Seraphica!—the daughter of a purple-dye merchant?"—growled the jailer, "and one of the Christian Religion, and but seventeen years old? Yes, you can see her in a few days: She will then celebrate her wedding on the feast of Mercury, with a young and beautiful panther; the most cheerful Ethiopian that can be found."

Pale as marble and trembling with horror, Charitana stood before the savage jailer, from whose scornful lips she had just heard the probable fate of her only child.

"I see you have some fruit," continued he, "I'll place it before her at the feast already mentioned."

"Unfeeling man, you mock me! Has icy death never torn from thee a beloved child? Have you never stood by the death-bed of one dear to you? If not, you can never understand what I now suffer. Oh! I conjure you to grant me this solitary consolation!—Allow me to speak to Seraphica before she leaves the prison for the festival!"

"Where is your purse?" asked the jailer. "If it be well filled, matters can be favorably managed."

"No, heartless man! gold and silver have but sparingly fallen to my lot, but the laws of Rome, which grant to the condemned a feast before death, are not so severe as to refuse a mother a last

interview with her beloved child.—Were I to offer you the little money I possess, you would not be contented.—But I remember now, I have a treasure—a great treasure—one I have inherited and which can be divided between you and me, without decreasing. I can give you as much of it as your heart desires, as soon as you grant my petition."

"Extraordinary promise," replied he. "What is the value of that treasure?"

"Of more value than this terrestrial orb, even were it of Diamond." The jailer's countenance brightened up. "In any case a great exaggeration," said he to himself.—"Still it can reach to a diamond ring."—Then turning round, he seized upon his keys, and gave Charitana a sign to follow.

They passed through long and vaulted corridors, where nothing broke the silence that reigned around, save the hollow echoes of their footsteps. At length they stood before a low and narrow door—unlocked—the bolts withdrawn—and Charitana is in the presence of her daughter.

O, happy moment!—a sweeter in this place of sorrows none had ever known! But silence! Yonder sits the youthful captive—not suspecting who is near. Her right arm is chained—the left supports her head, and she is in a deep slumber. "Ah perhaps," murmured Charitana in a low voice, "thou already knowest what awaits thee in a few days! Perhaps fearful visions are even now passing before thy weary eyes!—Yet, no, those features speak not of fear: that countenance is as a mirror reflecting interior peace and holy resignation."—In her fettered hand, she loosely holds a girdle; upon which she had evidently been ruminating; and so had sunk to sleep.—She drops the hand, and the girdle falls from her listless fingers. She moves—smiles and holds converse with herself.—"Yes—yes, never to be forgotten Polycarp!—Not on parchment, but on far nobler material have I written all thy words!—Polycarp! shall we meet again? Soon?—O it will be some time yet! *"Until then let us have hope ever before us, and never lose the pledge of our righteousness."*"

Charitana having placed the fruit upon the ground, stood immovable before her dreaming child.—But as soon as she heard the words "Oh it will be some time yet," she could no longer refrain from shedding a flood of tears.

At length in a subdued voice, she pronounced her daughter's name, "Seraphica! do you know who is here?"

The young girl answered dreamingly and slowly, as though she felt obliged to reflect on every word.—"Here?—Here are peace and solitude."

"Seraphica, thy mother!"—"Mother? No she has fled!" and sighing heavily, she dashes a tear from her pale cheek, and casts her half closed eyes on the girdle at her feet. Suddenly she perceives a form before her, she shudders—and quick as lightning raises herself from the ground, and exclaiming: "God of all goodness!" casts herself into her mother's arms. "Do I dream, or art thou really she, or art thou an angel who visitest me? Wondrous!—through closed doors in this gloomy dungeon!"

"Yes, dearest child, it is thy mother! Life without thee seemed more painful than death itself. Six anxious months have I wandered through the mountains, where I found true and loving hearts; one alone was wanting—and that was thine. But now I will not leave thee until I know thy fate.

"Since that dreadful day, thou hast been ever present to my mind. When I heard that thou wast seen in the Amphitheatre, Oh, what anguish did I not endure! Hour after hour passed on.—My worst fears were verified.—I heard that thou wast taken prisoner." "Yes mother," replied Seraphica, "though most unworthy, I have been chosen to suffer imprisonment and chains for the sake of my Redeemer. It was a dreadful day, yet one replete with blessings.

"O hadst thou seen our venerable and saintly Polycarp! Couldst thou but have gazed on those features of a hundred years, glowing with charity, peace and simplicity!

"Many feared that his great age would have rendered him unable to reach the place of martyrdom, with that heroic fortitude expected from one who had led a life so holy. But how

*These were the words of St. Polycarp to the Philippians.

groundless was that fear! O, mother! hadst thou but seen that Saint in death!"

"Still, my child, I had the happiness to meet our holy Bishop in the suburbs of the city, a short time before."

"He was driving in the chariot of Herodus, and Nicetas, his father sat near him. Both were trying to induce him to call the Emperor the most high God, and to offer incense before his statue. But finding their entreaties vain, with savage fury they dashed the venerable old man from the chariot, and his face coming in violent contact with the pavement, was deeply wounded. He arose covered with blood, but proceeded on his way as joyous, as if he had suffered nothing. This was the last time I beheld him."

"The sanctity of his life is ever present to my mind. I think I hear him still, relating the conversation he had had with St. John and others, who had seen our Lord, and all they had told him of His doctrine and miracles."

"But dearest mother, thou wast not witness of his last hours, of his farewell discourse.—Thou didst not see him as he passed the bodies of young Germanicus and his companions, who were the first that suffered, and stood before Quadratus who, in a voice of thunder, said to him, 'Swear by the fortune of the Emperor, despise Christ and I promise thee thy freedom! Swear!' At this command the spectators pressed forward, in breathless expectation of his answer. Polycarp replied with a slow and solemn voice:

"Already six and eighty years have I served my Lord, and He has never yet done injury to me, but on the contrary, He is always heaping favors on me. How can I curse my King—Him Who has redeemed me? But knowest thou not of the future judgment—and of that unquenchable fire, lighted by eternal justice, to torture the wicked?" The people burned with the desire of seeing the judicatory inquiry at an end.

"They had already looked on blood, and drunk from it a new desire for murder. At this moment a voice was heard from one of the principal seats of the Amphitheatre, 'Let wood be conveyed hither!' This was echoed by a thousand voices. 'Wood! Let wood be conveyed hither!' In a few moments a huge pile was erected: Quadratus gave the signal: and Polycarp, turning to his faithful followers, bestowed on them his last Benediction, unloosed his sandals, removed his girdle, and with a firm step ascended the pile; a living testimony of the words of St. Paul:

'Who then, shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or persecution, or the sword? As it is written: 'For thy sake we are put to death all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. But in all things we overcome, because of Him that hath loved us. For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, neither things present, nor things to come; nor might, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Jesus Christ our Lord.

"As the executioner was in the act of binding him to the stake, he said in a low voice: 'This precaution is unnecessary. He who gives me strength to bear these flames, will also give me strength to bear them patiently.

"He then commenced his dying prayer: 'Almighty God, Father of Thy dearly beloved Son, Thou God of angels and the Powers, Thou God of all creatures! I thank Thee, that I have the happiness to partake of the Chalice of Thy anointed One. Accept me into the number of Thy martyrs, receive me as an agreeable offering. I praise Thee for all things, and glorify and magnify Thee through the High Priest, Jesus Christ. To whom with Thee and the Holy Ghost be all honor now and in eternity.'

"While many of the faithful, who were present," continued Seraphica, "were offering up their prayers with him in silence, there arose suddenly a clear, bright flame on high, which caused a death-like stillness in the multitude, and behold the miracle! The roaring element arched round the saint, like a mighty sail swelling with the wind. A deep sound of horror echoed through the crowd, as they perceived this visible and miraculous interposition of the God of the Christians,

"When Quadratus saw that Polycarp was untouched by the fire, he made a sign to one of the executioners. All waited anxiously for the fresh commands, and in an instant one of the executioners, appointed by the Proconsul, sprang upon the pile like a tiger upon his prey, and plunged a dagger in the old man's breast. Polycarp stood motionless, but as his breathing became quicker, the blood flowed profusely from his wound into the flames beneath. He sank at length upon his knees, closed his eyes, rendered his mighty soul to Him who gave it, and his body to the flames."

Here Seraphica was silent; the strongest emotion for some minutes overpowered her. She leaned her head upon her mother's shoulder, and her raven hair fell upon her pale face, like a veil of mourning. "Let us be comforted," sobbed forth Charitana, "Polycarp has won the crown of life. He was an unwearied champion, and now his eternal sabbath has begun. He fought the good fight, and went to receive his reward on the very day, on which the Eastern Church commemorates the death of our Redeemer."

Charitana, thinking it possible, that in a few days more Seraphica would follow in the footsteps of the holy Bishop, continued: "The life of every good Christian is a martyrdom, which ends but in death." Seraphica, whose mind was wholly occupied with the last hours of the holy Polycarp, heard but little; her mother's words died on her ear, and she continued uninterruptedly: "The sanguinary deed was scarcely completed, when the people cried aloud: 'Long live the Proconsul and Roman justice!' The multitude applauded, but we Christians wept in silence.

"His sacred relics were scattered" to the winds by the excited people. We still lingered on, and felt as though Polycarp phoenix-like, had risen from his holy ashes, and overshadowed his orphan children with his protecting wings. The sandals, staff and girdle of the saint, lay untouched before us. We hastened to secure these precious mementos. Some had already possessed themselves of the sandals and staff, whilst I, endeavoring to seize the girdle felt, in the same moment, a hand upon my shoulder, and a rough voice spoke aloud: 'Behold this is one of the poisonous plants that spring up from such seed!'—and in the twinkling of an eye, the girdle was twisted round my arm—I was bound, led across the Arena, and cast into one of the dark cells of the Amphitheatre. This then dearest mother, is the girdle of which I speak; and these are the spots of his holy blood." Charitana took the sacred relic and pressed it to her lips. Tears fell from her eyes, but they were not, so much for Polycarp, as for her noble-minded daughter, who seemed to suspect nothing of the probable fate that in a few days awaited her. "Well Seraphica," said the mother, on returning the girdle "when shall we meet again?" "When our Heavenly Father wills it!" she answered, and resumed her former discourse: "As I was being led from the Amphitheatre to prison, one of our friends, Irenæus, the priest, who was Polycarp's beloved disciple, met me. He recognized me, drew closer, and admonished me in Latin as follows: "Hold firmly the doctrines of your Saviour, which the Holy Ghost hath imprinted in thy heart." "Yes, I will preserve it—Yes, to my last breath."

"When shall we meet again?" repeated Charitana, "which of us shall be first called hence—Thou or I?"

Seraphica perceived the anguish with which the question was accompanied, and seizing her mother's hand replied: "We shall die in that very hour that God wills, and not when man conjectures. On my account cease to be anxious. *I shall not die yet.* I have besought our Lord not yet to call me to my eternal home. I wish to suffer, but not to die; I burn with the desire of showing to the world, in the mirror of a pure life, the doctrines of our Redeemer, and to relate to many of the unbelievers, what the Son of God has done for man? and not till I have fulfilled that mission, shall I be called hence. It may be long till then! God has heard my prayer, and my Guardian Angel has revealed it to me." Suddenly loud knocks were heard at the door.—The jailer commands Charitana to depart, and does not even give her time to take leave of her beloved child.

Seraphica was again alone; she reflected on the words: "Which of us shall first be taken hence?" but the answer gave her no anxiety. Casting her eyes on the lovely fruit which her mother had brought, she took a pomegranate, and on dividing it, she discovered in the center some pieces of gold: they were evidently secreted there for Seraphica, that she might therewith soften the heart of her savage jailer. She tasted the fruit but could not eat, for she was unable to swallow.

The jailer detained Charitana at the door of the prison. "Well, it seems you have forgotten the promise you made before I allowed you to enter. Did you not speak of a magnificent diamond that you were to give me? Come, where is the precious stone?"

"You are right," replied Charitana, "I promised you a gift of more value than this terrestrial globe, were it composed of diamond. This treasure is the mystery of Faith, and those who possess it, become a free people—yes, become kings and princes. I will impart to thee those mysteries."

"How, fool? Will you take upon you the part of Apollo who once stuck upon the Phrygian king a pair of long ears? You want to make a Midas of me!—No—no, you must be the cheated one, not I. Do you hear the noises coming from the slave Market? those are the cries of the Christians undergoing the lash. Thou, fool, art also a Christian, and one of the worst. I overheard distinctly your conversation in the dungeon, and this very evening I shall hear the gold and silver I shall receive for your detection jingling in my pocket." He then thrust the unhappy one into a cell, and slammed the door with such violence, that the noise echoed like thunder along the corridors.

CHAPTER II.

THE EARTHQUAKE.

AFTER the conquest of Asia Minor by the Romans, Smyrna, one of her most celebrated cities, was obliged to pay her share of the yearly tribute imposed on the province, in wool, carpets, mohair, tapestry, nut-galls, and above all, gold dust from the rivers Hermos and Paktolos, and whatever luxuries the extravagant Romans could desire, in Asiatic perfumes and cosmetics, which were brought to the harbor, and shipped for Rome, as were also slaves in great numbers.

Notwithstanding this heavy tax upon the people, trade flourished, and the population became so numerous, that the shady gardens and capacious quays, which surrounded the lovely bay, could scarcely accommodate the various classes of the inhabitants, who thronged there, for their evening promenade, to enjoy the cool sea-breezes.

Here also might be seen the Roman Proconsul, Statius Quadratus, attended by his body-guard. It was to him the merit was due, that the tribute flowed in so freely.

Quadratus turned aside from the crowd, and walked towards the shore, when he met Asmenes, a priest of Isis, who had been educated in Egypt, for the service of that goddess. He bowed to the Proconsul, who said to him: "Well, Egyptian naturalist, tell me whence comes this oppressive heat, at this unusual season of the year?"

"A difficult question, replied Asmenes, "although in the calends of November, we have a heat, which seldom occurs in the height of summer. I did suppose the evening would have become cool, but it seems just as if the heat increases in the same degree as the sun recedes. I wonder whether the Christians, who fare but badly in the market, have not used some mysterious means against the sun!"

"What do you mean?" said Quadratus.

"It is said," replied Asmenes, "that the Thessalonians are masters in necromancy, and that there are more soothsayers and magicians amongst them, than amongst any other people. But for my own part, I think that the greatest are to be found amongst the Christians. It is beyond doubt, that at the death of their great Prophet, the sun withdrew his light for three hours; and

it is also related that in by-gone times, the sun stood still in the heavens for three days. It was only this Spring, when Polycarp was before your tribunal, a mysterious voice spoke to him, which was distinctly heard by all present.* But thanks, a thousand thanks to you noble Proconsul, who have granted our petitions, and well rid Smyrna of that sorry scoundrel. Ha! look at them bound in the ship yonder! O may Isis grant thee for this, health, happiness, and prosperity!" Both advanced a little further up the walk, which led to the shore. Several caravans returning from Arabia, and laden with its treasures, passed them on their way to the city, there to deliver them on the coming market-day, and to reload with other wares, to sell again in their own country.

Quadratus was a man of mean education, and very superstitious; he continued to dwell upon the witchcraft, which according to the priest of Isis, lay in the hands of the Christians; and as the heat increased, his anxiety became the more intense. At last he stood still, and looking towards the West said: "Do you see that strange appearance?" convulsively seizing the priest's arm. "Look at that unusual red, covering the heavens! It cannot possibly be the reflection of the setting sun, which appears yonder on Argos. What are the gods about to send us?" Asmenes looked in silence on the spectacle. Deeper still became the glowing red, the higher it rose in the heavens, till it ended in a deep violet hue.

On the extreme verge of the horizon, a pale yellow gleam extended along the North, West and South, until it approached the East, where it was scarcely visible; and little bluish vapors rose from the sea, which became larger as they ascended. The temperature then changed into that of a rough, sharp harvest season; small clouds danced, spectre-like, here and there, upon the surface of the water, and rising in the air passed over the city, and spread themselves on the neighboring hills.

"Do I deceive myself," said the Proconsul, "or are we actually in a thick fog? I feel fearfully cold too. Let us hasten home, I fear the worst, either pestilence, or war, or a general devastation." "It is the departure of the Christians," said Asmenes, "they are preparing all this for us; I have expected nothing less, than that their departure would be connected with some such display. Thus, when in old times, they fled out of Egypt from King Pharaoh, they did similar things, and even divided the Red Sea, so that they passed through, as if on dry land; while Pharaoh and his whole army found death in attempting to follow them. And it is very possible that their departure now, will also be accompanied with bad consequences."

With this apprehension, they separated, the priest to his dwelling, and the Proconsul to the palace, for consolation from Herod, the Irenarch.

A number of dark Smyrnians were passing along the streets, some seeking the open air, others the harbor; for the oldest inhabitants understood the signs, and remembered that they were always followed by a greater or lesser convulsion of the earth.

Quadratus, accompanied by his body-guard, then hastened home. His palace formed a wing of the citadel, which was so elevated, that one could scarcely fear any danger. He durst not trust himself in the open air, for he dreaded the unusual excitement called forth amongst the greater portion of the inhabitants, by his cruel persecution of the Christians. No sooner had he arrived at the citadel, than he ran anxiously through all the apartments, and looked out at the starry heavens, first through one window, and then through another. He, who has so often proudly rocked himself in his Sella, and laughed as he looked on, while the combatants in the Arena are torn to pieces by lions, or the condemned Christians cast to wild beasts, has now become a trembling coward, as soon as he sees his own life in jeopardy.

Herod showed more courage. He preferred to watch the operations of nature. When all was silent and motionless, he mounted his steed, and rode with some friends to a beautiful valley outside the city, which to the present day is called the "Valley of Paradise."

*As Polycarp entered the Amphitheatre, a voice was heard from Heaven "Take courage Polycarp!"

Midnight was approaching; the heavens were beautifully clear, and a solemn stillness reigned around. All listened with breathless attention, yet no sound could be heard of that hollow, subterraneous rumbling, which usually precedes a convulsion of the earth. Even one amongst the party, who laid his ear close to the ground, could not discover anything to cause alarm.

Herod suddenly thought that he heard, not far distant, something he could not define. His friends were divided in their opinions, till it was soon discovered to be the reiterated barks of a watch-dog, on the roof of an adjacent villa. The barking echoed along the valley, and became gradually stronger and quicker, till it broke out into a loud, tremulous howl, which was soon taken up by several other dogs in the neighborhood. "A remarkable omen," said Herod, as he shook his head thoughtfully. On a sudden, the horses, with manes erect pawed the ground, reared, plunged, and dashed with their riders, foaming on.

Close to the city, the greater part of the inhabitants, weary of watching and exhausted with anxiety, returned to their dwellings. While some wondered that the appearances were so much dreaded, others were enquiring if the same signs had ever been observed before, without having been followed by evil consequences. The more cautious took balls of stone or metal, and suspended them by threads or long hairs from the ceiling of their rooms, in order to detect the first motion, and save themselves by immediate flight. Watches were placed on nearly all the houses; but the silence was unbroken save, from time to time, by a foot-fall, or the anxious whisperings of human voices. Although the guards were numerous, still they were insufficient to protect the property of the inhabitants from plunder. Thieves were lurking in all directions, hoping to profit by the general consternation.

Asmenes, the priest of Isis, on his return home, discovered that a great robbery had been committed in his absence. Occupied with the things that were then passing, he had forgotten to lock up his effects carefully, and behold! he found himself robbed of his new golden *Sistrum*, or "Isis-rattle." Complaining to his goddess, that she did not protect her own property, and burning with rage, he armed himself with a sharp knife, and ran down to the vestibule, thinking probably, that a second attempt would be made on his house. He waited there a long time. The cheerfulness, wherewith a little company of captive Christians were wending their way through the Hercules Street, towards the sea, formed a striking contrast to his fury. The slave-masters, fearing the worst, wished for greater security to put them aboard the ships, and send them out to sea when the signs became sufficiently alarming.

The procession approached an arch, with two torch-bearers in advance. The captives were intoning one of the beautiful canticles of their persecuted church, as they passed along. Asmenes stole behind a pillar, and as the words: "Laudate Dominum omnes gentes," fell upon his ear, he muttered to himself: "These are the blasphemers, the robbers, the cannibals, who are bringing so much misery on Smyrna! Now they approach! Nemesis will deliver them up to my vengeance:—an agreeable sacrifice to the Shade of Hades!" Seizing his knife, he darted forward, exclaiming: "Thieves! give me back my *Sistrum*—my golden *Sistrum*!"—and—crash!—a terrific rumbling like thunder, rolls beneath.—The earth no longer able to restrain the pent-up element, bursts asunder at the very feet of the heathen priest—He totters—falls, and in an instant finds his grave. The fiery element, just liberated, rushes with ungovernable fury along the street.—Another shock:—house after house heaves:—towers totter:—Castles are rent asunder, and street after street are heaps of ruins.

But what of the wretched inhabitants? They run to and fro in wild despair: they call on the gods to help them:—"Help! help! ye gods, or we are lost!" Some, in frantic haste, hurrying to the shipping; whilst others seek refuge in the mountains, or in the adjacent fields. The darkness increases the horrors of the awful scene.

The upper part of the city remained still undisturbed. The massive edifices and principal temples, had as yet withstood the fury of the element. Many of the people fled on the wings of terror to the temples of their gods; particularly to the great sanc-

tuary of Homer, which was soon densely crowded. The confusion reached its height; flight was impossible, on account of the innumerable piles of smoking ruins, that everywhere impeded the steps of the unhappy fugitives. Men, women and children of every class, whom terror had deprived of their senses, might be seen, here and there lying among their fallen dwellings. The dead were carried into the open places by hundreds, still greater was the number of wounded, bruised, and maimed: and heart-rending were the agonizing shrieks of those, who were lying half buried beneath the scorching ruins, unable to afford themselves the slightest assistance.

The increasing darkness suggested the necessity of seeking the aid of torches; and he who was fortunate enough to pick up one, hoped by its means to find his way out of the city. But the endless heaps of rubbish, the rising exhalations, and the clouds of dust, rendered escape impossible. Even where a free passage was left, the red flickering light of the torches served only to make the 'darkness visible.' In several parts of the city, the fire burst forth again with redoubled fury, and destroyed, with incredible rapidity, everything within its reach. Some maintained that it proceeded from the earth, whilst others thought it was caused by the fires of the forges and of the dwelling houses buried beneath the ruins. Each one had something terrific to relate and many were of opinion that the end of all things was at hand, and that the world was about to be destroyed by fire. Suddenly cries were heard from the quarter, where stood the palace and citadel: a fresh chasm in the earth was issuing forth another destructive fire.

Statius Quadratus hoped to save himself by taking refuge on the highest terrace of the citadel. But he hoped in vain; for whilst on bended knees, he was imploring the protection of the gods, a roaring flame issued from the foundations, and forced its way through the palace till it reached the terrace, where he was. Terrified at the sight he drew back so far, that he had no other choice but to cast himself down from the height, or to succumb to the devouring fire. "Ten thousand sesterces to him who helps me!" But the flames had already claimed their victim. A scream, a faint moan, and Statius Quadratus has finished his wicked career.

Up to this time, by the fall of the above mentioned masses of dwellings, no less than the tenth part of the inhabitants lost their lives. Those who had sought refuge in the Temple of Homer, were nearly all crushed to death by the falling of the roof and pillars; but what appeared most strange was, that the bronze statue of the poet himself, was split from head to foot. More fortunate was the lot of those, who, like the Christians, sought in the first instance, to save themselves by sea. The unusual calmness of the waters formed a striking contrast with the destruction and devastation which raged on the shore.

Two hours after the tremendous shocks on land, the sea began to heave and swell at the mouths of the Hermos. Although the tide was then at the ebb, it rose, with the greatest rapidity, far above the highest flood-mark. On a sudden, a volcanic force beneath, raised the foaming waters mountain-high, and bearing the richly-laden vessels on their convulsed bosom, swept them as if triumphantly across the stone pier and cast them into the city. Then gaining a height of more than eighty feet, they passed over the highest buildings still standing, and, in their course, quenched the volumes of flames, which were issuing from all parts of the city. As if the sea were charged to complete the work of desolation, its waters receded slowly, leaving the shattered vessels mingled with the smoking ruins; * and in its return bore back in thousands, the dead bodies of the inhabitants. In such horrors the night passed on.

At last, impenetrable darkness, gave place to the morning-dawn. The earth was at rest, and the sea had resumed its wonted calm. The survivors, although they had lost all, looked upon themselves as enviable mortals. Strangers embraced each other, as though they had been dear friends meeting after a long separation.—It was a sad mingling of joy and sorrow.

*One large-sized vessel was found in the centre of the ruined Theatre.

On one side could be seen fathers and mothers weeping over the dead bodies of their children, on the other, children inconsolable for the loss of their beloved parents. The morning sun rose in splendor, and the sparkling waters danced in his beams, as if rejoicing to meet again.

What form is moving yonder on the heights? pale and slender, robed in white, enriched with the golden hues of the rising sun; bearing a broken chain on one arm, and a girdle on the other. It seems as though it were the guardian spirit of this once great city, mourning o'er its fall. Slowly and thoughtfully she passes on, till she reaches the still smoking ruins of the citadel. She pauses, and casting down her soft dark eyes, surveys the desolation that lies before her. The spectacle surprises her, but her mien betrays neither fear nor horror. Her expression is that of silent resignation to the will of Him, who makes the earth His footstool. She was roused from reverie by a voice exclaiming: "Seraphica here! The captive at liberty! The victim of death, standing over the tombs of her persecutors."

Seraphica answered with a gentle gravity: "Yes, Irenæus," for it was he, "the captive is free. After one had opened the door of my prison to announce my approaching death, another mightier than he, rent its strong walls asunder, and I was liberated. I now stand gazing on a city, whose splendor has vanished from the earth. Even whilst I am now speaking, I see several buildings falling into ruins. Irenæus, is not that my mother's dwelling? Oh what of her, revered master? Is she amongst the living or the dead?"

"You could scarcely wonder," replied Irenæus, "if she had shared the fate of so many. But no, Seraphica, she is saved, but saved by slavery. She and some of her companions in the faith, were, last night, shipped for Rome. But delay not to save yourself; your chains show that you are a captive."

An hour later, Seraphica was seen standing on the deck of the only sailable vessel to be found in the harbor. She was on her way for Greece. One look—as the vessel receded from the shore, and it was the last, upon the ruins of a city, where she had spent her few and momentous years.

She could discern her mother's half destroyed dwelling on the projection of a hill; but the palm trees and little garden had disappeared. And behold! while she was still gazing, the walls gave way, the roof fell in, and nothing remained of her once loved home.

CHAPTER III.

METELLA.

WE will now conduct our readers to charming Attica, so often celebrated in the poet's song,—to the land of great generals and lawgivers, to the cradle of philosophy, to the seat of the Muses, and to the place of refuge for the Faith.

The fame of Athens had, at this time out-grown itself, and began to tend towards her ruin. But even then she was in possession of all the intellectual acquirements of the past ages, and enjoyed the results of the thoughts, actions and labors of her forefathers. For this reason, it is the ripest and most beautiful period in her history. As the sun increases in beauty, whilst sinking in the West, so did Athens when verging on her downfall.

The Emperor, Adrian, loved Athens more than any other city in his vast dominions; and all the magnificent edifices and new regular streets on the other side of Adrian's Arch, extending wide, and forming, as it were, a second city,—were the work of this great Emperor. After this vast addition, Athens could accommodate 180,000 inhabitants. Adrian's Arch which thus connected the old city with the new, and which to this day is in good preservation, proclaims the later history of Greece in that degree of development, in which the Roman life was bound up with that of the ancient Greek, and which had blended both nationalities into one.

Outside the old city, to the north-east, was a pyramidal mountain called Lycabett; at the present time it is over-grown

with thorns and brushwood. As tradition runs, Pallas, the tutelary goddess of Athens, was at one time fully occupied in ordering materials for building the Acropolis, which was dedicated to her. She was carrying even the Lycabett in her arms, when a crow fluttered round, and announced to her the birth of Erichthonius. Seized with terror, she let the mountain fall, close by Athens, where it now stands.

At the foot of this mountain, from the summit of which, the traveler has a charming view of Athens towards the citadel, and of the blue sea, were the palaces of the Greek and Roman nobles, who had settled there; and one which occupied the first place amongst them, was that of a Greek matron, named Metella. It stood not far from the principal entrance to the famous aqueduct, built by Adrian, and a little higher than the magnificent royal citadel outside Athens, which strangers still admire.

Like all the edifices of Adrian's time, Metella's palace was of Roman architecture: still the better taste of the Grecian was not wanting in the lightness and elegance with which the design was carried out. Inserted on the front of the vestibule, was a marble slab, on which might be read the name of the owner. Over the door of the principal entrance, stood a brazen statue, representing Hope, with the inscription, "Dum spiro spero," "As long as I breathe I shall hope."

Guarding the porch or entrance hall, was a slave, beautifully attired. He bore handsomely wrought fetters, which he rattled from time to time, thereby to give himself the appearance of a door-keeper. His walk, and the ease with which he swung his chain, proved that pride knows how to govern all classes of society, down to an ignorant door-keeper.

Metella tarries on the Pergula, a name given to a pavilion on the roof, and which is supported by gilt pillars. The lady, in all her natural elegance, reclines on a couch; and near her stands a marble table, on which lies an unfolded book-roll. It is the work of a Roman poet, her darling Virgil, whose eclogues she is reading. She raises herself, and taking her pen, writes down one of the most beautiful passages, on the reperusal of which her eye, and the movement of her head, show plainly, that the depth of some of the poet's words are not clear to her. But some of the verses please her so much, that she reads them aloud.

"Sicilian Muse, begin a loftier strain!
Tho' lonely shrubs and trees that shade the plain
Delight not all. * * *

The last great age, foretold by sacred rhymes,
Renews its finish'd course; Saturnian times
Roll round again, and mighty years, begun
From their first orb, in radiant circles run.
The base degenerate iron offspring ends;
A golden progeny from heav'n descends: * * *
The lovely boy, with his auspicious face,
Shall Pollio's consulship and triumph grace;
Majestic months set out with him to their appointed race.
The father banish'd virtue shall restore,
And crimes shall threat the guilty world no more.
The son shall lead the life of gods, and be
By gods and heroes seen, and gods and heroes see,
The jarring nations he in peace shall bind,
And with paternal virtues rule mankind.

* * * * *
Mature in years, to ready honors move,
O of celestial seed! O foster son of Jove!
See lab'ring Nature calls thee to sustain
The nodding frame of Heav'n, and earth, and main;
See, to their base restor'd, earth, seas, and air,
And joyful ages from behind, in crowding ranks appear,
To sing thy praise, would heav'n my breath prolong,
Infusing spirits worthy such a song;
Not Thracian Orpheus should transcend my lays;
Nor Linus crown'd with never fading bays;
Though each his heav'nly parent should inspire;
The Muse instruct the voice, and Phoebus tune the lyre." *

"Virgil, thou speakest beautifully," says Metella, "but I cannot understand thee. Nearly fifty Olympiads have passed since thy death, and I know nothing of that child of the gods who is to expiate guilt, and to redeem the world. There are a people in

Asia, who believe that a god has lived amongst them, but he came to an evil end.

"When will the human mind find truth upon earth? It will ever stand before an enigma, and never solve it, for that enigma is itself."

She takes up a book, in Greek, an old work on history, which relates the misfortunes of Cyrus, king of Persia. She has scarcely read a few pages, when she seeks another chapter, nor does that content her. "Always the same," murmured she, "Cyrus broke up and advanced: here he commenced; Cyrus liked this, and wished that you also might partake of the enjoyment."

"No Xenophon," she exclaims, "thou art ever bread without salt, tasteless and unpalatable."—

She seizes the scrolls and casts them down on the polished Mosaic floor, so that they roll against the marble balustrades of the balcony.

"O time! O time!" she continues, "how unjust thou art sometimes with the works of the human mind! How often dost thou break to pieces in thy iron mortar the best and most beautiful, and scatterest it to the winds, scarcely leaving a remnant for us, whilst thou carefully preservest in thy sanctuary, the insipid and wearisome works, presenting them anew from one generation to another!

"But what want we with a book in this city!

"Athens lies open at my feet—a book of which Cecrops, seventeen hundred years ago, wrote the title page, and Theseus, the first chapter—A work, each leaf of which tells of wisdom, of power and of character. O let me read in thy pages, thou great, thou lovely city!—

"ATHENS THOU FEAREST THE GODS, and carriest the traces of thy piety written on thy marble forehead—on that Acropolis, rich in temples.

"Countless statues hide the sanctuary of Pallas from my view. Through gratitude to the gods, under whom Ægides fought and conquered, our forefathers erected the Parthenon,* and its founder, the immortal Pericles, speaks from every column, an earnest assurance to future ages, that a nation is never so strong nor so powerful abroad, as when its religion is strictly observed at home.

"Behold in the centre of the Parthenon, the colossal of the Athenian Promachos. Her gigantic form, towers above terrace, dome, and cupola; and her brazen plumed helmet and shining spear, announce to the distant lonely fisherman of Sunium, that thou, lovely Athens! art under the protection of Pallas.†

"ATHENS THOU ART JUST! and whoever doubts this; let him look at the Areopagus on yonder hill, in whose hall of justice the Archons, during the solemn silence of night, assembled in council, to pass judgment on the crimes, committed against religion and the state.

"ATHENS THOU ART BRAVE! and if a barbarian knew nothing of thy fame, that statue of Apollo yonder, would break the silence, and relate to him, how the youths leaped and wrestled there, and how they are to this day, a subject of astonishment to the Romans.

"ATHENS THOU ART THE SEAT OF SCIENCE, AND OF WISDOM! Thy Theatre, thy Lyceum, thy Sculpture-Halls, thy Academies, thy Colonnades proclaim it.

"Truly all thy monuments are leaves in this wondrous book, which thy sons have written, to declare to future ages, of what greatness of mind mortals are capable."

Whilst Metella was in this excitement, the sun had moved nearer to the olive groves, that lay between Athens and the sea, casting a rosy hue upon the thousand statues of the Acropolis, as if they were blushing at the praises Metella had just bestowed upon them.

At this moment, Metella's blooming son and future heir, entered the pavilion. He saluted his mother and informed her, that her slave-master, Bogus, had just returned from Smyrna; but that he had brought nothing she had ordered, except an Asiatic slave. He added that Bogus had related wonderful things of Smyrna, which was almost entirely destroyed by an earthquake.

Metella, full of thought and astonishment, rose from her couch, and leaving the pavilion sought Bogus, for further news of Smyrna's fate; with whom we shall now leave her, till we relate some features of her life.

Metella was by birth a Greek, and before her marriage, bore the name of Chrysophora. She was acquainted from her youth with all the works of the ancient writers. Her father was Atticus, who was born at Marathon, one hundred and four years after the birth of Christ, and was one of the greatest men of Greece, a famous orator, a Roman consul, then tutor to Marcus Aurelius, and at last, Prefect of Greece. Although this celebrated man was such a favorite at the court of Rome, and could boast of the personal friendship of the two Anthonys, he still remained thoroughly Greek and prided himself on his noble birth, which he traced as far back as Miltiades, who conquered the Persians on the plains of Marathon.

Like a true Greek, he strove to keep up the renowned sports of his country. The spectators assembled for the Olympic games, were often parched for want of water, and he caused an aqueduct to be built for their convenience, at Olympia, by which he won the applause of all Greece. In beautifying Athens, Atticus gained great merit, but little thanks: the famous Odeon at the entrance of the Acropolis, the ruins of which are still standing, have immortalized his name. He had also the merit of erecting an hospital, and of beautifying the Stadium,* which accommodated 20,000 people.

In Adrian's time, there lived in Athens an estated Roman, named Metellus, a man of noble descent, who could trace his origin to that Metellus, who in the year 147 B. C. gave the death blow to the freedom of Greece. He had reached a middle age, and retired into private life, where he first found time to think of marriage. Whilst in Rome, he had told Atticus, the then consul, of his desire to espouse his daughter, Chrysophora. She was an only child, for her brother died young, and her mother, Regilla, soon followed him. The negotiations in this business, were attended with obstacles which could not be removed by the suitor. The young and rich heiress, according to her father's desire, was to give the preference to a son of Greece, to which choice she evinced but little inclination, and Atticus was obliged to take the petition of the suitor into consideration. In addition to this, both Metellus and Chrysophora had attained that age, recommended by Aristotle for a prudent marriage.†

Chrysophora had been seldom in Athens, while her father, whom she always accompanied, was generally in active service. Metellus having for some time sojourned chiefly in Greece, had not seen her since her childhood.

The circumstance of the betrothed, not knowing each other, although they were shortly to be united, is frequently met with amongst the ancients.‡

As soon as the aged Atticus had signed the contract for his daughter's marriage, Metellus, journeyed at once to Peloponnesus, where Atticus so frequently resided towards the close of his life, to go through the ceremony of the betrothal. It was early in the morning, when he reached Elis, the longed-for house; and he impatiently entreated his future father-in-law to let him have a sight of his bride. Atticus excused her, as she was still occupied with her toilet. In fact, she had just ended her morning dream, as she was aroused by her slave, who announced to her the unexpected arrival. Chrysophora, wishing to appear in full holiday charms, ordered her slaves to bring forth her

* The Parthenon suffered the greatest devastation, in 1687, when the Venetians, at the taking of Athens, threw a bomb-shell into the powder magazine of the Acropolis, by which the roof of the temple was blown into the air. Still, at the present day, a forest of magnificent columns stands: a splendid edifice over which 2300 years have passed without entirely destroying it.

† Promachos and Pallas are other names for Minerva. This famous statue was still standing in the fourth century, after the departure of Alcibiades.

* Stadium, where the bull fights were held.

† Aristotle says Vol. vii. 18, that the woman should marry at 18, and the man at 37.

‡ We are allowed to try a stone jug before we purchase it, but the wife is: been lest she might not please, before she is taken home. Theophrast. oy. Hyeronym. Jovim i. 48.

costliest robes, and to seek from her caskets the richest pearls. While one was occupied in preparing the rouge, another was powdering richly with gold dust, according to the fashion of the times, her raven hair, until it had attained a reddish hue. A slave passed even Atticus without a token of respect, so great was her haste in carrying to her mistress, sandals embroidered with the finest pearls—a sign that the toilet duties would soon terminate. But as the blooming girl, desired to please still more by her natural charms, than by her ornaments, she left on the renowned cosmetic of bread and milk, with which she covered her face every night before retiring to rest, until her toilet was completed, contrary to the usual custom. Atticus concluded, when he saw the slave carrying his daughter's sandals, that the important task was finished. He then thought of complying with the earnest entreaties of Metellus, and led him to his daughter's chamber.

Conceive her terror, when she heard loud steps upon the stairs! A slave hurried to the door, to stop the entrance of the guest, but he, driven on by exhausted patience, to see his long chosen one, forced the slave aside, and stood before the horror-stricken Chrysophora. The terrified slaves, instead of gathering round their mistress to screen her from his view, concealed themselves in the remotest corners of the room. There stood the vain Chrysophora—gorgeously attired, with the fatal paste hanging in fragments from her lovely countenance, showing here and there a strange contrast, between the delicacy of her complexion, and the grey hue of the cracked and dried-up cosmetic, which stubbornly adhered to the right cheek, to the forehead, and round the left eye.

Her heaving bosom betrayed the passion that raged within. Her eyes, or rather eye, for the left was half concealed behind its casement of dried bread and milk, flashed with rage. At length her tongue found utterance, and her wounded pride sought consolation in declaring, that she would recall her promise, and break the contract.

We see that even in this hour of dire humiliation, her woman's tact did not wholly desert her. She feared that this discovery would lessen the esteem of Metellus, and furnish a plea for breaking the contract. So she took care, in the midst of her confusion, to threaten the dismissal of her lover, when she thought he was likely to dismiss her, and it required all the flowery eloquence of an Atticus, to make clear to her, the folly of her resolution.

Metellus' cool deliberating character took advantage of the confusion. He enjoyed a privilege which any Roman would have envied, that of seeing his bride before marriage, and seeing her too in an unguarded moment. Her majestic form was his beau-ideal of perfection, and the visible portions of her charming countenance, exceeded his most sanguine expectations; so that, making every allowance for the little ebullition of temper he had just witnessed, he concluded that he had the greatest reasons to congratulate himself on the choice he had made. Having now fully satisfied his curiosity, he put on an embarrassed air, and making an humble apology for the intrusion, left his affianced lady to finish her toilet, and to distribute due castigations amongst her trembling slaves.

After this dilemma, the ceremony of the betrothal was completed by Metellus placing a ring on the third finger of his future bride's left hand; for the ancients believed that a nerve passed from that finger to the heart.

A day in the coming June was decided on for the nuptials, as that month was regarded as the most fortunate of all the year.

The haughty bride attired herself on that day, commensurate with her youth and rank and the solemnity of the occasion. She wore, according to the custom of the Greeks, a long white robe that fell in rich folds, confined at the waist with a woolen girdle. Her feet were provided with sandals brought from Morocco. Her hair parted into six long curls, was beautifully interwoven with wreaths of flowers, and her entire dress was completed by a rose-tinted veil, which fell gracefully over her majestic form.

The marriage ceremony was performed in her father's house, at Elis.

Sacrifices were offered to the goddess Hera, and the gall of the victims was thrown away, as a sign that all bitterness was to be banished from this union.

The marriage was confirmed in the presence of several witnesses, after which the guests partook of the wedding feast. There was one sad heart amongst them,—that of the aged Atticus. To the left of the table where he sat, was a cover for one, which remained untouched during the feast: it was that of his departed son, whose place at table, although he had been many years dead, remained unoccupied. There is so much that is touching in this trait of Atticus' character, that even the historian Lucius, who loved to dip his arrows into the sour dregs of Attica Sarcasm, here would have refrained from it. A custom was still observed amongst the Romans, which descended from the ancients who, as it is known, robbed the Sabines of their daughters. Therefore in imitation of this, the bride was taken off during the feast. In some cities this custom is still practiced. Young girls accompanied the bride to her chariot, one of whom carried a distaff, to remind her that spinning and household affairs are the proper portion of a matron.

The festivities commenced the following day, at the house of Metellus, in Athens. The bride herself received presents from her friends, and began to enter on her duties as mistress of the house. The old Hellenic principle was also to be observed by her: that it was for the man to speak and have authority, while the woman's duty was to devote herself to her husband and children, and to superintend the domestic arrangements.

The bride now took the name of Chrysophora Attica Metella, or for brevity, Metella. But with her name she did not lose her desire for knowledge, which she had sought after from her childhood. She knew how to unite it, in a fitting manner, with the duties of her state.

Time spared Metella's youthful charms, but for a few years. Her beauty faded, and various misfortunes told her but too soon, that man's life is ephemeral, and that he cannot with certainty, count on the morrow. Still her desire to please was nearly as ardent as before; but she sought to gratify it in another form. As she could no longer boast of her personal advantages, she endeavored, by the depth of her knowledge, and by the greatness of mind, to attract admiration; and as riches came to her assistance, she soon had numerous friends, who enjoyed the luxuries of her table, and bestowed in return, what to her was more agreeable, their unqualified eulogies. There was scarcely a lady in Athens so much renowned for learning. She not only read the works of all the poets and philosophers of Greece, but also studied them under the careful guidance of the best masters, and above all of her renowned father. Later on, many troubles crossed her path; first, she lost her beloved parent, who had passed the remnant of his days partly in Kephisia, where he possessed a magnificent estate, and partly in his birth-place, Marathon. Her husband quickly followed.

Lucius, a very talented and excellent youth, was the only fruit of this marriage. He had attained his fifteenth year, when he was called on, according to custom, to perform the most melancholy of all filial duties—to hold, with averted face, the funeral torch, and set fire to the pile on which his father's remains were to be consumed. His mother deeply felt the loss of her husband, for although he had little taste for learning, still it never disturbed the harmony that existed between them. Scarcely a week passed that the faithful wife did not go to the "Sacred Street," or "Cemetery" to adorn a tomb, on which was an inscription beginning with the words: "Pause, O Traveler!"—and which covered the urn that contained the ashes of her lamented husband.

These bitter blows of fortune, proved fruitful towards the development of her soul. From this time, her former longing to shine in learned conversations and disputes, considerably lessened; and a strong desire awoke within her, to ornament her future life, through noble works of virtue, which somehow seemed to her, brighter and higher in value, than learning. This great desire had only lately inspired her soul. We find here in Metella three developments of character, and who does not often discover these changes through life?—First there was the love of

exterior natural gifts:—then followed the love of the endowments of the mind and lastly came love of the adornment of the soul

Now let us glance at the newly arrived travelers. We have been informed that there was a young Asiatic slave, just come from Smyrna. It is no other than Seraphica. In the consternation that reigned in the harbor of her native city, it was not difficult for the Merchant of the vessel in which she sought refuge, to claim her as his own property; and as he had large dealings with Metella, he made a present of the young stranger to his rich customer.

Metella had scarcely looked on Seraphica's youthful and attractive form, than she gave an approving nod to the slave-master and asked him her birth-place. As she was born in Lydia, she was to be called in future after her province,—“Lydia.” The last that Seraphica held as her own, was her Christian name. and that too, must vanish. She stood a stranger amongst strangers far from her native land, from her kindred, and from her companions in the Faith—She who now commands her is a heathen. Nothing more then, remained for her, than a look towards the blue heavens—common to all, and to place her trust in Him whose throne is beyond the stars. For His sake she has given up all, therefore her trust in Him was boundless. For He who could speak naught but truth, gave her the holy assurance, that she should receive a hundred fold in this life, and life everlasting. (Matthew xix.)

CHAPTER IV.

THE TIROCINIUM.

In the magnificent square near Adrian's Stoa, the people of Athens might be seen crowding about a porphyry pillar, on which hung a decree, beginning with the words “Bonum Factum.” Those who stood near the placard, could scarcely be induced to leave it; whilst others did their utmost to copy the contents, and those at a distance, though they stood on tip-toe, still could not see to read more than the two words, “Bonum Factum.” “A good deed.” At last, some who stood nearest to the pillar turned round to those at a distance, and called out. “War is publicly proclaimed against the barbarians!”

Almost at the same instant, a herald passed through the square, and in a voice of thunder, announced the Emperor's declaration of war, against the people of the Danube; and that both Emperors,—Marcus Aurelius, and Lucius Verus, were to head the armies in person. Scarcely had the herald ceased to speak, when the people expressed their unqualified approbation, by loud and continued applause.

Amongst those who were thirsting for war, was the youthful Lucius, who still wore the long *Toga Prætexta*, striped with purple. With glowing cheeks, he hastened to some companions of his own age, to relate the news, and to consult on what part they were to take in the matter.

At this time, Metella was completely ignorant of what was passing in the city. She was at home, and for pastime, according to the singular custom of noble ladies of that day, had a tame serpent coiled round her neck; and was feeding it with crumbs of bread, whilst with her foot she beat time to distant music.

At this moment her copyist approached with a sheet of news he had just finished, and laid it on her richly chased silver table. While she was reading it, Lucius rushed in with flying Toga: “Mother, Mother! have you heard the great news? War against the Marcomanni and the two Emperors are themselves to be in action and to accompany the army to Aquileia. And all the youths capable of wielding a sword, are called on to make preparation.”

“Quietly my son” replied Metella, “you storm as if you were Mars himself. Do you not know that the sages never repeated anything so often to youth, as: ‘Not so fiery!’ you have left your Toga behind you. pick it up.”

“Oh how stupid!” replied Lucius, “but no wonder! I have lost my head as well as my Toga, but the loss of the latter is a favorable omen.” He lifted up his Toga and again approached his mother. “This is exactly what I would beg that you will allow me to doff altogether this Toga of the boy and to put on that of the man.” And looking big with importance he drew himself up to his full height, and with head erect marched up and down the room followed by the eyes of his mother who, with maternal pride, thought there was only one Lucius in the world. He stopped suddenly before her; “dear mother,” said he, “I should like to be a soldier, and join the campaign, young Quintus, the Proconsul's son, is not older than I am, and he has just told me that he has leave to go.”

“Quintus' father has other children—but should Metella lose her darling Lucius,” she said, placing her hand upon his head, “she has no one on earth to love. Say, my dear child, can you cause me so much anguish?”

Lucius, a little daunted, answered in a subdued tone: “Ah mother, must then all be killed who go to the war?”

“Perhaps,” said he, taking courage from her silence, “I may never meet with such a chance again in my whole life as to go to war with an Emperor—Two Emperors—think only—two Emperors, mother!” Lucius saw that he was gaining ground, and continued: “Do you remember how as a school-boy instead of writing on my tablet the names of great men, I used to draw little soldiers? Don't you see then that the military propensity was born with me.” Metella shook her head with a sorrowful smile.

“Dear mother, you do not expect me to become a Stoic, an Academic, Peripatetic, or even an Epicurean?—No! by the sacred oak of Dodona,” shaking his head jocosely, and with a hearty laugh, “I have no vocation for any of these! I think I see myself reflecting on the works of nature; staring at the heavens, with mouth half open, and head thrown back at the risk of injuring my spine, and measuring distances between the stars!—No!—no such tame occupation for me: that I will leave with pleasure to the philosophers and astronomers. I never see the tombs of the heroes at Kerameikos without envying their immortal fame. For the future, I shall be like Themistocles, who could not sleep at night, for thinking of the fame of Miltiades. My grandfather, Atticus often related how he was descended from the great Miltiades; and you, dear mother, have assured me of the same, a hundred times. Do you remember what my father said to me on his death-bed: ‘When thou becomest a man, be faithful to the Emperor till death.’”

“O yes! but he quickly added; ‘and obey your mother.’”

“But, mother, you know the campaign will not start this Autumn—not till the coming Spring. By that time, you will be able to reconcile yourself with your son gaining a few leaves from the Laurels of his immortal ancestor Miltiades. But if I am to join in the Spring, I must certainly get my white Toga now, and go through the exercises, the whole Winter, in the field of Mars. Therefore, dear—dear mother, the Toga Virilis! I beseech you to say, yes! Yes, mother, the man's Toga! Think only—I'm seventeen!”

“Patience, patience, my son, you shall have your man's Toga at the proper time.”

“But now, dear mother, not when the others are gone?”

“No, no:—”

“Therefore, may I go to the wars? May I, dear mother?”

“Well then, if you believe that this will secure your happiness, my dear son, let it be so. Go! and may the gods protect you!”—

At these words, the afflicted mother tenderly embraced her son, saying: “Remain always my child, as long as I remain thy mother, and I trust thou wilt ever be a good one, and well-pleasing to the gods.”

The joy of Lucius knew no bounds. He saw himself in spirit a Freeman of Athens, and one of its bravest warriors; and could scarcely await the day, on which he was to stand before the Proconsul, and receive from his hand the manly Toga.

“Mother,” said he, “don't you think that, in eight days, it

will be time to change the Toga? Until then I'll conduct myself right well."

Metella laughed at this acknowledgment, and ordered a calendar to be brought, that she might see what festival was to be expected in Autumn. She found that the festival of the siege of Troy would be celebrated on the 15th of October. "That is for a second Achilles, just the very day," added the mother jestingly. "On that day you shall become a recruit."

"On the 15th of October," exclaimed Lucius "that will be an important day! True, there are several weeks till then, but the 15th of October will be a magnificent day!—That *will* be a day of rejoicing!" So said the fiery youth. "Now I must hasten to Quintus.—Farewell, my own dear mother, farewell," and in a moment he was out of sight.

Metella studied how she could make this festival, called Tirocinium, sufficiently important, that it would leave an indelible impression on the mind of her son; and she resolved on asking the Proconsul to make his address of exhortation for the occasion, most impressive and affecting. She next remembered—all the friends she would have to invite, not one of whom she dared to forget.

The Tirocinium of the ancients, was a festival which made a deep impression on every youth. It was intended to celebrate the transition from youth to manhood. In a solemn public address, they were exhorted to fulfil the duties of thoroughly good citizens. The great deeds of their ancestors were set before them; and if their forefathers were not renowned, they were reminded of the virtues of their nation. When it happened that some citizen was brought to justice on account of a misdemeanor, the judge took care to remind him forcibly of the resolutions and promises he had made at his Tirocinium.

We shall now see how the young Lucius celebrated this feast. A number of the noblest youths of Athens were summoned to appear before the Proconsul. All Metella's friends and relations were already assembled in the palace, but the lady of the house and her son, for whom the feast was given, were not yet visible, for they were still in the *Lararium* or temple of the household gods; where Lucius might be seen standing with outstretched arms, in fervent supplication, imploring a blessing on his future life. During a solemn prayer dictated to him by a priest, he vowed to the gods to treasure virtue above all things, and to hate vice. Then full of awe, he touched the knees of the statue, turned himself round to the right, and remained again standing before the divinity. His mother prayed by his side in silence. She wrote down on a waxen tablet, a promise to the divinity, that if her son lived to return from the wars, she would offer to the gods the spring produce of all the herds on her estates. Her prayer ended, the wine offerings commenced.—The fire burned on the small marble altar; the youth seized a golden cup, and filling it with wine from the sacrificial vessel, cast a portion into the flames, the remainder he poured at the feet of the divinity. He then placed a cake upon the altar, and whilst it was burning, he strewed the choicest incense from Arabia on the flames, which diffused a delightful perfume through the whole sanctuary.

The mother then advanced towards her son, and took from his neck the golden amulet, placed there by his father at his birth, and which was meant to keep him in constant remembrance of filial obedience, and to serve as a preventive against danger and certain diseases.—Metella placed it as an offering at the feet of the divinity. Lucius still dressed in his *Prætexta* with a cheerful countenance, left the Temple, and joined his friends, who were anxiously awaiting him. After having received congratulations on all sides, and covered with a thousand blessings, he was numerously attended on his way to the Proconsul's.

At this period the Athenians no longer held their usual assemblies, as at the time of the Republic, outside on the Pnyxhill, rich in historical memories, and which was celebrated by the renowned orators, but in the theatre of Dionysius,* where many

youths were now assembled awaiting the Proconsul, to receive the *Toga Virilis*. At last he appeared and seated himself, when one youth after another accompanied by his friends, advanced towards him, laid down his *Prætexta*, and received from his hands the *Toga Virilis*, which was of white, bordered with purple.

The Proconsul exhorted each one separately on the significance of donning the Toga. "The purple stripes of the boy's Toga, said he to them, have always reminded you, during your boyhood, that you were to lead such a life, that when you became men, you might deserve to wear the purple bordered Toga, as a sign of higher service in the state. You must also never forget that you are the descendants of those renowned Greeks, who delivered their native country from the hands of the Persians." After the duties of a citizen had been impressed on the minds of the youths by a most eloquent address, they were then surrounded by their friends, who vied with each other in offering them their congratulations. Lucius with his friends, ascended the heights of the Acropolis, there to recommend himself to the protection of Pallas. The Cella of the Temple was open, and they devoutly approached the Prosthyon, the so-called Sanctorum, the vaulted roof of which was painted blue, and studded with stars; this was a portion of the temple set apart for the most solemn rites of their worship. Here stood in all her imposing splendor, and elevated to a considerable height, the ancient and renowned statue of Pallas, covered with immeasurable quantities of gold and ivory. The devoutly inclined, prayed before her with great fervor, while the less devout feasted their eyes on the magnificent statue, the master-piece of the celebrated Phidias, and then on the elaborately chased golden lamp, that hung before the goddess.*

Lucius on his way home, looked every now and then with particular complacency on his *Toga Virilis*, and smiled upon his friends for approbation, who gravely assured him, that he had already quite the appearance of a citizen, which he was too modest to acknowledge, but did really think so.

"A beautiful feast" said he to them, as he descended the superb marble steps of the Temple, "but there is one thing I felt keenly as I invoked the goddess, protectress of Greece. The Greek youths must submit to be invested by a Roman magistrate, fight under the Nobles of Rome, and accept an Emperor, who looks upon Greece as a province, and calls her *Acacia*."

"It was otherwise in former times! O that it were still so. If my grandfather were now living, he would speak to-day at table, of nothing but the Field Generals of ancient Hellene. How would my mother rejoice, if she were to see the ancient Hellenes arise! That was the reason, without doubt, that she looked so sorrowful to-day, when we parted with her, previous to our entering the theatre of Dionysius."

But these serious thoughts quickly vanished, for Metella met and welcomed them cheerfully; and after a repeated exhortation to the son of her heart, she ordered the attendants to announce that the feast was prepared. The guests presented Lucius with many rich gifts, after which they sat down to table, where nothing failed in either delicacies or amusement. There were jesters, jugglers, and musicians, each contributing his mite to the general hilarity. Here might be seen the difference between Grecian and Roman enjoyment. The Greeks found the noise and jesting incompatible with the customs of their nation; whilst the Romans, poorer in their intellect than in their sensual appetite, found in this amusement, and in feasting the highest entertainment. Many of them would have been perfectly contented, to use Lucian's words, to eat undisturbed a sucking pig and sweet cakes, and in place of learned conversation, sink their head heavy with wine, upon the cup they were holding.

From this time forward Lucius attached himself to distinguished men, who were well versed in the art of war, and who

* Pausanias, the disciple of Herodotus Atticus, in his description of Greece i. 26. says: Kalimachus completed a golden lamp for the goddess, which contained sufficient oil for a year, although the lamp burned day and night. The wick was made of Spanish flax, which has the quality of not being consumed by fire. Over the lamp arose a bronze palm which reached the vaulted ceiling, attracted the smoke upwards and then dispersed it.

* To this day the high and beautifully finished orators' stone, upon which men like Demosthenes stood, as well as a great number of Amphitheatrical stone seats, are yet to be seen on the Pnyxhill. The Forum in Rome scarcely affords more interest, than this place of assembly of the people of Athens.

exerted themselves in training their client as a first rate soldier. He performed his military exercises every day in the field of Mars, full of burning desire to face the enemy, and to tread in the renowned footsteps of the great Miltiades.

CHAPTER V.

THE HAIR BODKIN.

SOME months had now passed, since Lydia had entered Metella's service as a poor slave. Slavery was to her as a wilderness, that stretched its parched surface under the scorching rays of the sun, far beyond where the eye can reach. But as once in olden times, the pious Ruth wandered alone over the stubble fields of Boaz, gleaning after the harvest, so Lydia wanders over her wilderness, carefully endeavoring to garner up the fruits of good works. The character of Metella was just one that gave her sufficient opportunity to practice self-denial. For those who appear so amiable and courteous to guests and friends, are often severe and cruel tyrants towards their dependents. We shall soon be acquainted with Metella's private character.

Lucius had just been called to the field of Mars, to take part in a greater display than usual of military tactics. In passing by his mother he greets her affectionately, and begs of her to witness the field exercises from a neighboring building. He had scarcely left the house, when an invitation arrived from the Proconsul, inviting Metella to join some guests who were to meet the generals at his house, after the exercises of the day.

Metella called a domestic, and as no one heard her, she *whistled** for a slave outside to enter. She then gave orders to have fitting attire prepared for her, and to arrange her best jewels: for the Proconsul according to Lucian, was a man that paid great attention to exterior ornaments.

With flying steps, Arpis, the head mistress of Metella's personal attendants, hastened to her lady's dressing-room, and brought forth a white tunic of the finest Milesian wool. The first had short sleeves, which merely covered the upper part of the arm, and were slit up the middle and fastened with golden clasps, according to the old Doric style. The neck and skirt of the shorter tunic were trimmed with a stripe of double dyed Sidonian purple; a distinction allowed only to matrons of noble birth. The part of the under tunic which appeared below the knee, fell to the ground in ample folds, and was terminated by a rich fringe. Arpis was at great pains in providing her lady's dress; and with wonderful dexterity she raised it on a stand and fastening the white girdle round the waist, saw that the tunic hung over the cincture in graceful folds.

A second slave exerted herself in arranging the head dress, and fastening the diadem, under which the hair was to fall in light ringlets on the temples. A magnificent bodkin of chased gold, surmounted with a figure of Iris in carved ivory, completed the head-dress; but it was not added till the toilet was completed. The bodkin was a much admired piece of workmanship of an ancient sculptor. The figure measured four inches, and was finished in all its parts with the choicest and most elaborate carving; it could be screwed off, and replaced by another, according to fancy. With a reverential awe she placed the precious bodkin on the toilet table. She had good reason for doing it with all possible care; for on one of the gold chains called *Cathedra*, which ran round the upper part of the dressing chair, was a whip of plaited wire, which, when occasion required was quickly brought into action. It was just as though Juvenal had Metella in his eye when he wrote on the cruelty of Matrons to their slaves.

"Poor Psecas decks her head,† herself in tears,
And her own locks all dangling round her ears,
Her neck uncovered and her shoulders bare;
Not saved from vengeance by her utmost care.
'Why is this lock,' the mistress storms, 'too high?'
Poor girl she rises the crime: one hair's awry!
What's Psecas' fault? Is she to feel your blows,
If 'tis your will to quarrel with your nose?"

—Juvenal, Sat. vi.

Lydia brought the shoes, and then arranged some of the folds of her mistress' dress. Metella, according to the fashion of the day, used paints, and ordered an oval mirror to be placed before her, so that she might improve and soften off with a hair pencil, what her maid had begun in rougeing as well as in the shading of her eyebrows. It suddenly occurred to her that she had a still deeper black which could be used with a greater effect; and as there was not much time to be lost, she called Lydia hastily to bring it. The order was scarcely given, when the unhappy slave, in turning suddenly round to fulfill the command knocked against the toilet table, and the bodkin rolled, fell and—lay on the floor in pieces. The unfortunate slave had no time to utter a word, before her mistress, inflamed with anger, springs from her chair, and in a state of frenzy, pounced, like a beast of prey, on the terrified Lydia, and stuck her long pointed nails into her arm. She then with abusive words seized the whip, and swinging the metal knots in the air to give her blows greater force, struck the poor slave lying at her feet most unmercifully, till she was covered with blood. Her groans excited no pity, and she was carried insensible from the apartment. The lady continued to storm, and even the slaves who were present could not find sufficient words to express the full extent of the offence. But to appease their infuriated mistress, they out-vied each other in bestowing a volume of praises on the magnificence of her attire, and the gracefulness of her slender form. Such flattery never failed to pacify her.

The toilet finished nothing more remained to be done but to throw around her the light white mantle, which hung in graceful folds over her left arm, and reached the ground.

All this time, six powerful Syrian slaves were waiting for her in the vestibule, with a long and easy sedan.

The ancients found it more agreeable to have themselves carried in a litter on men's shoulders, than to be drawn by horses through clouds of dust. In addition to this, the streets of all the cities in the South were so narrow, that carriages were nearly useless. Those narrow streets were, notwithstanding, most advantageous, as they afforded a cool shelter from the sun, nearly the entire day.

Metella's sedan was made of finely polished Citron wood; on the upper part of which were two poles drawn through, for the convenience of bearers. The interior lined with costly stuff, was sufficiently large for reclining, and was provided with rich cushions and a footstool.

The lady descended from her toilet to the sedan, and on her way through the vestibule, her roguish parrot in his ivory cage greeted her with his well-conned speech of flattery.

A boy placed a footstool before the sedan, while the waiting-maids, arranged in a double row, with their arms crossed on their breast, bowed her off, with all reverence and with no small pleasure. Metella folded her highly perfumed mantle round her, motioned for her little Maltese dog to be brought to her, which she half covered with her mantle, remarking with a smile that her little favorite has a cold, and sneezes often. Metella petted her little darling, and tantalized him with her golden bracelet. She reclined in the sedan, so that she could remain unseen by those whom she wished to avoid saluting.

The lady has taken her departure, and it is now time to inquire after poor Lydia. She was in her little room resting on a cushion. Ophe, her assistant in the shoe department, hastened to wash the wounds of her maltreated friend, and to give her all the comfort in her power. She expressed the greatest pity, and assured her, that she had herself often been made to feel the effects of the whip. She then began to relate Metella's cruelty in former times, and seemed to find a consolation in doing so. Lydia listened for a few minutes, and interrupted her saying: "This time, dear sister, our good lady had cause to be displeased. Think only of my awkwardness, whereby this disaster happened, and then of the loss she has sustained. We must be just, Ophe, and keep in mind the good qualities of our mistress. Think of the discipline and order she observes in her house: the many blessings she bestows on the poor; and the religious duties she performs so conscientiously every day." Ophe was astounded

* A custom in those days. Origen greatly disapproved of it for Christians.

† Her mistress' R. P.

at hearing such words from Lydia, and at such a moment. "Those are praises," said she "that we never bestow on our mistress, unless in her presence. When she is absent, we relate to each other her bad qualities. But I have remarked that you never flatter her; on the contrary, what you say sounds more like blame. But one thing you must acknowledge sincerely: Is it not true, that you feel rather stormy within, whenever you think of her cruelty, and that you will never forgive it." "In a certain sense, dear Ophne, you are right. I have never to forgive anything, because I never feel myself offended." Ophne reflected for a moment, and repeated the words to herself, 'I have nothing to forgive, because I never feel myself offended.' She could not understand how a poor ill-treated servant, who dares have no other revenge than that of the heart, could resign that also. She was far from suspecting that the man who bears patiently, in faith and hope, suffers also with a holy love. But she resolved that she would, while on her way to the currier's shop, where she was just going, reflect on the sentiments she had heard. Turning to her fellow slave, she gave her a hearty kiss on the cheek, and said: "You gentle lamb, give me some remedies that will help me to conquer my anger, I should wish to be like you exactly in this respect."

"For a Christian there are many remedies: first the clear knowledge of one's own imperfections; secondly, meditation on the sufferings of our Redeemer; and thirdly, forbearance and indulgence towards the errors of our neighbor."

"No my dear, I do not want remedies for a Christian, but for a heathen, such as I am."

"I heard once" replied Lydia, with a smile, "that a certain philosopher, who was much given to anger, determined on carrying about him a mirror, so that when anger darkened and distorted his features, he might behold in it their ugliness, and thereby conclude upon the far greater deformity of the interior."

"One word more Ophne, does not the currier to whom you are now going, sell sheets of parchment? Pray be kind enough to bring me a few."

"What has a sandal-maid to do with parchment," said Ophne, "and where shall I get the money to purchase it?"

"What I want with the parchment, dear child, I cannot tell you, but in any case I can give you the money for it. I have a few pieces of gold, which my mother gave me when I was a captive in Smyrna, probably thinking that thereby I might be able to purchase a little civility from the jailer. I did not avail myself of it, but kept the money secreted in my dress, and brought it with me to Athens." Lydia placed it in Ophne's hand.

"But you must tell me," said Ophne, "what are you going to do with the parchment. If you don't, I assure you I'll come back empty handed. I always looked upon you, as my dearest companion in misery, and to a prudent friend you may say anything."

"Well then," said Lydia, "if it must be so, I'll tell you."

"Our mistress asked me lately, when I told her that I was a Christian, if I could not procure for her the famous defence, written by the Christian philosopher Justin, and delivered to the Emperor Antoninus Pius. I have in the mean time, through the kindness of our bishop, Quadratus, received the writing. And now I should like to copy it, and surprise Metella with it on her approaching birth-day. She does not know that I am a calligraphist, and her joy will perhaps be the greater, when she finds the roll in her library. And now, child, you know all, go and bring me the parchment." Ophne stood before her fellow slave, as if transfixed by enchantment. With a gentle pressure of the hand, she gave her to understand on leaving the room, how clearly she had seen into the depths of her heart.

But a sweet feeling of heavenly enjoyment, such as the good alone experience, when they have performed a generous deed, flowed through Lydia's soul. It appeared to her as though a divine voice whispered to her: "This time thou hast acted well, for when I was fastened to the cross, I prayed for my executioners. I commanded my disciples to love their enemies, to do good to them that hated them, and to pray for those who persecuted and calumniated them."

Lydia had often heard this very exhortation from the lips of the holy bishop, St. Polycarp, who wrote the same in a letter to the Philippians: "We cannot rise with Christ if we do not avoid rendering evil for evil; on the contrary we must show mercy that God may show mercy unto us."

Ophne has returned and brought the parchment with her. Lydia commences to arrange the sheets, draws the line for writing, takes the instrument in her practised hand and copies the address, "Sent to the Emperor Adrian." She hoped to be able to bring in Justin's defence on a few rolls and was lost in admiration, as she proceeded at the beauty of thought and the clearness with which the mysteries of the Christian doctrine were explained. She rejoiced at the favorable impression which the writing was likely to produce on the mind of her mistress. She found herself unable to write more than the superscription, as her hand trembled violently at every letter and in addition the night was far advanced.

Laying down her iron style,* her mind reverted to the actions of the day just at an end. Now and then she cast her eyes upon the simple cross which hung in her room, and was tastefully encircled with the girdle of St. Polycarp, with which her hands had been bound, when she was taken captive in the Amphitheatre of Smyrna. She knelt down before the sign of her crucified Redeemer; for she had much to say to Him, ere she completed the duties of the day. With what delight did she fulfil the mandate of our Lord; to pray for those through whom she had become one merit the richer! "Accept, O God! the little affliction of this day, as if my dear mistress had suffered it for the love of Thee. If my patience were agreeable to Thee, do not ascribe this little merit to me, but to her. And should she ever deserve Thy anger, then, O Lord! punish not her but me! I offer up myself for her. One grace grant unto her, O Lord! The grace of knowing and loving Thee, our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ."

While she was thus praying, she did not perceive that a hand had drawn aside the curtain which concealed the door of her room—a few minutes, and it was again closed softly and unheard by Lydia, and Metella passed noiselessly along the corridor.

During the entire time of the military exercises, and the evening entertainment, Metella was greatly discontented with herself. The remembrance of her cruelty towards her poor slave pressed heavily on her soul; and it appeared impossible for her to retire to rest without finding some excuse to say a friendly word to the ill-treated one.

But as she found Lydia on her knees pouring out her griefs to her God, she was seized with a holy awe, and departed without uttering a sound. She withdrew into her private sanctuary, there to be reconciled to her offended deity for her conduct, and lighting some frankincense, she strewed it at the feet of a statue, and intermingled the action with penitential prayers. She pressed her forehead glowing with shame to the feet of the statue; but the cold goddess seemed to recede from her; the sculptured form had neither heart nor consolation for the oppressed supplicant. The poor heathen, with a heart full of contrition, resolved on performing an especial act expressing the deepest compunction. Such an act which we never meet with in succeeding centuries, and which had something in it most humiliating. She bent her head and spat three times into her bosom. Then she arose, and retired to her chamber.†

This was a penance amongst the heathens which had its foundation in the idea of showing themselves before the divinity in the deepest degradation, after having committed a wicked deed. In the Christian religion we have some such custom in the striking of the breast three times to express thereby, that as the heart is the seat of our injustice, so it deserves to be punished.

* The pen of that time.

† See upon this, Bottinger's "Sabina," A. M. O.

CHAPTER VI.

THE SACRIFICES IN THE TEMPLE OF JUPITER

THE warlike exercises already mentioned, were carried on throughout the entire Winter and Lucius applied himself to the duties of his vocation with such zeal that he had already gained the reputation of being a well disciplined soldier.

The Spring of the year 167 in which the imperial troops from the north of the Adriatic were to meet on the Alps, had commenced. Orders were issued from Aquileia, near to where the two emperors had passed their Winter that the people should use all the means in their power to invoke the favor of the gods. The greatest importance was attached to this campaign. It had to carry the banner of the Romans to the eastern banks of the Danube, and to announce the fame of the victorious arms to the surrounding barbarians as far down as the land of the Jazygan, now called Hungary, and the woody shores of the Theiss. The enemy was known to them; and the renown of Ariovist, the general of the Marcomanni, and of Armin's victory, were well remembered by them; and could they have forgotten the bravery of the Germans, they had a memento of it, in the annual procession of the Capitoline geese, which by their cackling once saved Rome from a nightly attack of those barbarians. Countless sacrifices bled on the altars of Aquileia, as well as at Athens. All the purifications customary since the time of Numa, were performed. There was also a Lektisternium of seven days celebrated, which consisted of meats being offered to the gods on small tables, before which the statues were left lying, but those of the goddesses were placed sitting.* To the east of the Acropolis not far from Adrian's Arch, where to this day, sixteen gigantic pillars of Corinthian architecture stand, was the magnificent temple of Jupiter Olympus. This edifice was supported by a forest of pillars, one hundred and twenty in number, and was two thousand three hundred feet in circumference. It was Adrian who completed this ancient building. A countless number of statues ornamented the whole, but the one which held the first place, was the famous colossal statue of Jupiter Olympus, in gold and ivory, finished by Phidias. In addition to this was the stupendous memorial to the Emperor Adrian, which had just been erected by the grateful city. This colossal structure could be looked upon as one of the seven wonders of the world, although not counted as one, and the ruins, to this day, make an astonishing impression on the traveler; which can only be exceeded by viewing the remnant of the Acropolis—a city of gods reduced to fragments!—

A clear morning smiled from the heavens, the sun had scarcely appeared above the horizon, when the men of Athens fit to bear arms, assembled together in their coats of mail and brazen helmets, glittering in the morning sun. Lucius was also ready, and whispered mysteriously in his mother's ear, that the Augurs complained; the day previous, that the sacred chickens would not feed, and that at the last augury, neither a raven nor crow had appeared. "Obstinate ravens," added he, "at other times they will croak all the day long."

"Therefore, we must pray the more for the assistance of the gods," replied Metella, who was just having a parsley wreath twined through her hair. "An unfortunate augury," said she, "is a serious matter, for thereby people lose courage. Have you not heard what the oracle at Delphi has proclaimed?"

"O, the oracle," said Lucius, "that knows no longer whether Cæsus is boiling a lamb or a tortoise.† The golden treasures of Delphi would be more acceptable to us now than its leathern oracles, and a Pythaulus is more thought of in those days than a Pythius."‡

* Stolberg's History d. R. I. viii, §. 73.

† A jest on the famous words of the Oracle in the time of Cæsus, who sent a messenger to Delphi to ask what he was doing at home at that moment. The Oracle gave a correct answer: "That the king was standing before a cauldron boiling a lamb and a tortoise."

‡ There were at this time, according to Pausanias, ten books, great treasures in Delphi: Pythaulus the combatant with the Dragon. (Phyton was called Pythaulus.) The Oracle gave its last answer about the year of our Lord 366, to Julian the Apostate: "Say to your king that Phoebus has no longer a shelter."

Metella now began to reflect seriously on the approaching war, on the unfavorable account of the Augurs, the probable fate of her only child, and on the sad farewell that awaited her in a few days. While she was buried in these melancholy thoughts Duranus, the boy whose business it was to strike the hours on the Clepsydra, slipped between the rich Indian curtains hanging before the entrance of her apartment and announced the hour to her so that she might hold herself in readiness to attend the sacrifice.

What a magnificent and exhilarating sight it was to see the thousands crossing the plains outside Athens, on their way to the Temple! The vivid flashes from the steel helmets and naked swords, the shields, glittering in the rising sun—the helmet plumes floating gracefully on the breeze—and above the heads of the warriors, could be seen in thousands, halberts, lances and standards, and banners of golden-winged eagles, waving and fluttering in the morning air. The legions arriving at the Temple, ranged themselves in order before the altars erected outside, which were richly decorated with wreaths and flowers. A herald stepped forward, and with a stentorian voice commanded profound silence. After the cry, "Javele linguss," the priest of Jupiter, robed in a purple mantle, appeared before the entrance of the sanctuary, and the sacrifice began, which, this time, was to be all the more solemn, as Jupiter had not inhaled the vapor of sacrifice from Olympia for a long time. The incense was already burning on a hundred altars, and the smoke ascended from countless thuribles. Then the priest, with a loud voice and raising his hands to heaven, addressed a prayer to Jupiter imploring the defeat of the enemy, and the triumph of the imperial arms. He promised that a portion of the booty, if the Romans conquered, should be appropriated to Father Jupiter and his Temple. Those who stood near the altars, touched them in sign of consent; others embraced the statues of the gods, multitudes of which were to be found amongst the pillars of the temple, whilst many made a circle several times round keeping their fingers on their lips in sign of their devotion.

When this was at an end, a number of magnificently attired servants, whose duty it was to attend to the sacrifice, walked in procession up through the centre, which was lined on each side by the warriors. Amongst them was Popis, with tucked up garments, who led a white, gilt-horned bull, which was without blemish, and was so gorgeously decorated with precious stuffs and rich ribbons, that he could hardly be seen. Whilst the animal was standing opposite the magnificent statue, which represented Jupiter grasping the thunderbolt, and seated on a throne of ivory, incense was again thrown up and cast upon the fires which burned on the altars. The smoke was so dense that the pillars became invisible, and the rich vestments of those who officiated, shone through the clouds of incense like sparkling gossamer. The priest of Jupiter advanced, sprinkled the animal with lustral water, scattered meal mixed with salt upon his head, then took some finely powdered incense, and threw it on the forehead of the bull, between the gilded horns. He then tasted the wine, and gave some of it to the other priests, who were standing round him dressed in white robes. After the bull had partaken of a libation of this wine, some of the hairs above his forehead were plucked out, and cast into the flames.

During this ceremony, Popis stood with his well sharpened knife, awaiting the commands of the high priest. On each side of the bull stood the firm-handed assistants of Popis, who partly had to lay hold of the animal at the moment of killing, and partly to catch the blood in the sacred vessels, and to pour it on the altars. Popis then asked the high priest, "Shall I do it?" who answered: "Do it." At this command, he plunged, with a powerful hand, the sharp knife into the neck of the animal, and during the bellowing, the warm blood of the victim was caught in vessels and sprinkled on the altars.

As soon as the beast had bled to death, the office of Augurs commenced. They began to examine the entrails and took out the heart and liver, but they examined the latter with the greatest exactness, as being the seat of numerous signs.* With a se-

* More advanced Physiology can give a reason why the liver was looked upon as the seat of mysterious signs or omens.

rious men, they divided it into two parts, and repeatedly complained, that this time, it failed entirely in a certain fleshy protuberance. But the heart of the animal and the well-arranged entrails gave more hope for a happy termination of the war.

The future was ascertained in this manner, and those parts of the victim which belonged to the gods, were sprinkled with flour, wine and incense, and placed upon the flickering embers. Upon this, the people approached and laid down their gifts, which were also burnt in honor of the gods; amongst these offerings were the most costly gold and silver ornaments.

But as this day's sacrifice was too important for only one bull to serve, so the heathens sent Jupiter a countless number of heifers, the principal of which were to be offered to the gods, others for the priests, and the remainder for the people, who sat down round the temple waiting for the feast, with the music of pipes, cornets and flutes. The feast at an end, prayers were said aloud, the wine was handed round, and then the people were dismissed with the words, "You are allowed to depart in peace." We have now in a few lines, placed before our reader a pagan sacrifice; and we leave it to him, to judge of the religious element of the action.

Only one remark we wish to add upon the fundamental thought of the action. Sacrifice is the centre, not only of the Christian but also of the Mosaic and even of pagan worship. He who makes the offering acknowledges that he is unworthy of the gifts of the divinity, and that he has forfeited them by sin. Therefore he places on the altars, the most beautiful substitute of the gifts of the deity, fruits, animals and treasures, in humble acknowledgment that he is unworthy of such blessings. The anger of God, according to the ancient faith, was to be entirely appeased only by a sacrifice of life, and hence came human sacrifices—the blood of man was looked on as the bearer of life, and poured upon the altar. Later on, the blood of animals was offered instead of human blood, therefore the offerings of animals, according to the ideas of the ancients, and also of the Israelites, were a substitute for many human offerings.

The religious ceremony we have just described in the Temple was intended to conciliate Jupiter, father of the gods, with mankind, and thereby to make them worthy of his assistance in the coming war. For the same reason, we see the people of Athens, one day after the other, making their offerings, at one time in the citadel of Pallas, at another in the massively built temple of Mars,* and in numerous other temples of the city.

At length the day dawned in which the soldiers were to take shipping in the harbor of Piræus. It was the day of separation from family, friends and country. Fathers reminded their sons of the old saying of the Spartan, "either to return with, or on the shield."

With blessings Lucius extricated himself from the tender embraces of a mother, who loved no one on earth more ardently than the fiery youth, who now, for the first time, took the field. He knew how to comfort his mother, by placing before her, the glorious future, and the high honors which the present war would secure. We shall soon see how he found, that youthful enthusiasm resembles a glittering soap-bubble, which only too soon sinks into a drop of muddy water.

CHAPTER VII.

CHARACTERISTIC SKETCHES OF THE SLAVES, AND THEIR MODE OF LIFE.

WHEN Lucius departed, his mother gave way to excessive grief. She now felt, for the first time, how tenderly she loved her son. While we leave her in solitude, retired from the world, with an ear for nothing else but the language of a mother's afflicted heart, we will take our gentle readers through the domestic portion of

this lady's immense establishment, and give them a little idea of the characters and mode of life, of its principal inmates

To commence then In those buildings surrounding the court yard, were an unusual number of cooks, all of whom were well experienced in preparing delicacies. They spared no pains, this very day, in serving up favorite dishes for their afflicted mistress; yet they had not the satisfaction of seeing her enjoy them. The duty of carrying them to table devolved upon youths of the finest form, purchased from the distant North, with their much admired blue eyes and flaxen hair. Next was a capacious hall, the occupants of which remind us of our own unhappy factory people. Maids were sitting behind a long row of looms, weaving stuffs, partly for their mistress, and partly for the numerous domestics of the house. In the garden were a still greater number of slaves, some planting vegetables, others weeding flower-beds and looking after the fruit trees. But in Metella's olive-gardens, vineyard, and in her country houses, both at Kephissia and Eleusis, one could only form a perfect idea of the number and occupations of her dependents.

After this general survey, we will now place some of the above mentioned beings individually before the reader. We will first introduce him to our favorite, who is just now standing in penance in the corner of the front impluvium, the fair-haired Duranus, whose duty it is to stand near the Clepsydra, or water-clock. When he perceived that strangers were coming, he hung down his head in confusion upon the little board, suspended from his neck, upon which was written the fault he had been guilty of. As it had gone well with him for some weeks, he took down the whip that usually hung on the balusters, and mischievously secreted it in one of the arbors of the garden. At length his conduct required it, and it was no where to be found, till the severe Bogus discovered it, and deeply impressed it on the shoulders of the youth. In addition to this, a log was fastened to his foot, and he had been already standing half the day in a corner of the colonnade. Although he then looked downcast, still his usual aspect was cheerful. He bore a strong resemblance to the playful squirrel, which is happiest, when climbing trees. His gentle disposition often expressed itself in the soft plaintive tones he drew from his Tibia.*

When mischievously inclined, he would take his tambourine, and drum upon it with all his might, till Bogus gave him a sensible hint, that it was time to strike the hour on the Clepsydra.

This Bogus was a rough, hard-hearted man. He had spent some years in the army, of which he was not a little proud, as could easily be seen by the care with which he kept up his military deportment. He is Metella's slave master, and carries a staff in his hand as the sign of his office, and has the superintendence and power of punishing the slave. A cap firmly pressed down on his head, and tightened round his full bloated face, gives one to understand that he is no longer a slave. Formerly he was one, having been taken prisoner of war, with other soldiers, and made to pass under the yoke, in the market-place of Athens. He was sold as a slave to Metellus, from whom he had afterwards received his freedom. A scourge would have suited him better than a staff, for nothing gave him greater pleasure than to tie a slave up to a pillar, and fasten a heavy weight to his feet, in order that he might have him in a straight immovable position, to receive an uncertain number of lashes. His cruel disposition resembled Caligula's. This Emperor one day, ordered several youths of the best families of Rome, to be lashed, and then put to the torture, and this merely for pastime. His severity to his inferiors, was only equalled by his cringing servility, and uncomfortable politeness to his superiors.

A similar situation to that which Bogus had once enjoyed with Metellus, his deceased master, an old female slave, nearly sixty years of age, named Selina, enjoyed with his mistress. She was an African by birth, and had passed more than half her life with her present mistress. She had known Metella as a child, and was purchased by Atticus in the slave market of Rome, to nurse his little Chrysophora. Her dark brown African counten-

* The beautiful Doric temple on the west side of Athens is considered to be one of the best preserved ruins of antiquity, and is usually called the temple of Theseus. Professor Doctor Rosse mentions that this temple was dedicated to the god of war.

* A musical instrument of that day.

ance formed a humorous contrast with the fair delicate complexion of her youthful charge; and Atticus never thought that his little daughter looked lovelier than when she was reclining in the arms of her ugly nurse. Selina, therefore knew the whole life of her mistress, and had so great an affection for her, that she preferred living as a slave with her, than to accept the freedom proffered her. But this affection was almost her only good quality, for in consequence of her evil dispositions, which increased with her years, she made herself perfectly insupportable to her fellow slaves, and was so uncharitable, that she could not have a servant near her, to whom she did not speak in confidence against every other person in the house. In spite of this, it was to her a matter of the first importance, that she should bear a high character in the eyes of all. On the other hand, she was such a hypocrite, that she poured forth her flatteries, not only on her mistress, but on the very meanest of the slaves. This cringing character is a quality in the Africans. Though so old, she daily used a number of superstitious means to preserve her dark beauty, and being ashamed of her short woolly hair, she concealed it with a handsomely folded turban. As she had been so long in service, she was able to put by a considerable sum, for she received monthly wages, in six measures of corn and five florins in money. With her savings she had her own peculiar way of speculating, and resembled the Indian ant, which, it is said, collects gold out of the earth. She bought, from time to time, a cheap slave, made some profit by his labors, and then disposed of him at a great gain. Her last purchase was a first-rate gold embroiderer, who cost her but forty florins. She knew so well how to save her money, that she never, without absolute necessity parted with a farthing. Nevertheless all this hoarding could secure her, in this life, no further distinction from her fellow slaves, and none after death, save the solitary privilege of having her body consumed on the pile. But in order that our gentle readers may not imagine that all Metella's slaves were like the grey-bearded Bogus or the swarthy Selina, we will now say a few words of the gentle Ophne, of whom we have already spoken, and of Thrax, the dwarf.

Ophne, during the few years she had spent in the service of Metella, had passed through a series of difficulties. At first, she was employed in the lowest manual labor, then she was raised to the dignity of dusting her lady's sandals. Her next step in the advancement, was that she learned to work in leather, so that she could finish off sandals to the perfect satisfaction of her mistress. With extraordinary facility, she could imitate the pattern of everything she saw in the way of needlework, and complete it equal to the original; and one had only to give her a sign, and she brought exactly what was required.

It was irresistibly droll to see her, when chosen to accompany Metella on a walk. Fearing that her numerous friends would not observe her in company with her mistress, she bustled along, fanning her most attentively, then nodding to her friends, first to the right, then to the left, so that her perpetual motion would lead one to suppose that quicksilver ran through her veins.

Thrax, the dwarf, stood in direct opposition to the lively Ophne. At the age of five, he was purchased by a Greek slave merchant, and his being extremely small for his years proved his greatest misfortune. His diminutive size suggested to his master the idea of training him for a dwarf. For this purpose, he was put in a dwarf-case, as Phinius expresses it, that by constant pressing and a sparing diet of fruit, he might not exceed the required height—three feet. After having been trained, he was offered for sale in the public market place of Athens, where the good Metella purchased him at a high price, but much more through pity, than for a household fool. Thrax not being a dwarf by nature, had not their usual qualities of wit and sarcasm, but was, on the contrary, a gentle, harmless little fellow. A smile played round his lips, which kept up a medium between laughing and crying. In the goodness of his heart, he willingly allowed each one to make merry at his expense; but at the same time, although he answered in a friendly manner the questions put to him, one could see by the tears starting in his eyes, that his feelings had not been stunted with his growth. Metella, as

well as her son, had always treated him with great kindness, and any one who required his departure, had only to say something of the absent Lucius, whom he tenderly loved, and he would instantly disappear and hide either in a corner of the garden, or somewhere in the house, to give vent to his feelings.

It was useless to talk of freedom, either during the ancient Republic, or during the time Rome was an empire; but when we know that this freedom was built upon the servitude of the two-thirds of the population, we begin to change our opinion. To give an instance: Athens in the time of the governor, Demetrius Phalereus, 300 B. C., had about 21,000 freemen, 10,000 half-freemen, and 400,000 slaves. Therefore there was a glaring disparity between freemen and slaves. The following is another historical example, which casts a blemish on the highly-lauded freedom of ancient Rome. It was a law, that, when a master was murdered in his own house by one of his slaves, and that the murderer could not be discovered, all the slaves of the house had to die. The rich Podanius Secundus of Rome was thus murdered by one of his slaves, and four hundred were according to law, put to death. The people objected to its being carried out, and sought to save the unhappy creatures; but the Emperor Nero, to whom the shedding of human blood was a pastime, had the way by which the condemned were to be led to death, lined with soldiers; and the cruel sentence was fully enforced. A record is still extant, from which we may infer how great the number of slaves was, which one master could possess. The law strictly forbade that a master, in his last testament, should grant freedom to more than one hundred of his slaves, if he had twenty thousand! "He is a poor man," cries Seneca, "who can find pleasure in a service of slaves more numerous than the army of a warlike nation, and in private edifices the circumference of which exceeds great cities, and when he compares what he already possesses, with what he still desires to have, he is in comparison a beggar!"

With so immense a number of the oppressed, we need not be surprised, when the Roman history informs us, that from time to time they rebelled. For example, the insurrection of the slaves Eunus and his sixty thousand followers, and later on that of Spartacus, who met the Romans in the field with forty thousand. They were conquered, and put to death by the sword, or crucified by thousands.

Some hundred years later, we hear the rattling chains fall from the hands of the slave; but who, many will ask, helped them to war and to freedom—Eunus, or Spartacus, or One who stands higher than all Roman Emperors—God?

CHAPTER VIII.

JUSTIN'S APOLOGIA.

It was Metella's birth-day, and all vied with each other in presenting marks of affection to their good mistress. Graceful garlands were twined tastefully round the colonnades leading to the palace. The most beautiful fruits and flowers that field and garden produced, were brought in ornamental baskets, and placed in rich profusion. Some were occupied in strewing leaves and flowers, while others were mixing perfumed artificials, procured from the Egyptian florist, with the green garlands.

The newest and best works were exhibited; garments, girdles, sandal-ties, and fans, all of which were received by the lady, with great condescension and acknowledgment of the industry displayed.

But a present that she found the evening before in her book-case, surprised her more than all the rest. It was a roll of parchment, on which the following inscription was beautifully written.

To the Emperor Titus Ælius Adrianus Antoninus Pius Augustus Cæsar; and to Verissimus his son, the philosopher, and to Lucius the philosopher, son of Cæsar by nature, of Pius by adoption, a lover of learning; also to the Sacred Senate; and the

whole Roman People: in behalf of those, who of all nations, are now unjustly hated and aspersed. I, Justin, son of Priscus, grandson of Bacchius, of Flavia Neapolis, in Syria of Palestine, one of your number, presents this volume and address.

When Metella read this long title, she immediately guessed from whom the present came. But she was still more astonished to find that it was written by Lydia herself. Her Christian slave had already made a deep impression on her mind, since the time she discovered her on her knees before her cross, in her little room praying for one, who had just treated her so cruelly. She then formed a high opinion of her exalted virtue, and this opinion was not lessened, when she received this last proof of her noble revenge.

"If the Christians thus reward injuries done them," said she to herself, "they cannot possibly be guilty of those crimes, which are attributed to them."

Metella then ordered the writer to be called into her presence, and assured her that she admired more the motive whence the gift proceeded, than the gift itself.

"This writing," said she, "I have long wished for, but never could procure it till now. We must read it together in a quiet-hour: I value Justin so much, because he had the courage to proclaim his convictions. Although Plato stands higher in my estimation than all the other philosophers, still there is one thing in which he is blameworthy, and that is that, notwithstanding his belief in the great Creator of the world, he sought in a speech delivered to the Athenians, to inculcate the popular belief in the plurality of gods, fearing that like Socrates he might lose his life.*

"Would you like to know the doctrine we hold? Perhaps it approaches nearer to yours than you suspect. We believe that Jupiter is the Beginning and the End, and that all things proceed from him.† Our school accepts also that Jupiter has subordinate gods, like messengers, who execute his commands. We therefore, are widely separated from the doctrines of the lower classes, and from the flighty Romans. Their folly cannot stand

The poets have no right to make new gods, to embellish the history of their lives, and to force them on the people as truths. Homer and Hesiod ought to have been branded as impostors and sent into exile. Each one after, according to them, invented new gods, so that now we have trouble enough to remember even their names. There is no such thing as a god with goat's feet."

After a short pause, she said: "With respect to this, do you know that very important oracle of the dead Pan?"

"Certainly," replied Lydia.

"What do you know about it?"

"In the reign of the Emperor Tiberius Epitherses, the father of the orator Aurelian, together with many others, found himself on board a merchant's ship, in the vicinity of the islands called the Echinades. The sun had gone down, when not far from the island of Paxos, a voice was suddenly heard which called to Thamus the helmsman, who was an Egyptian, and whose name was scarcely known on board. A general astonishment seized all present, and the helmsman remained silent to the first and second call; the third time he answered, whereupon the voice swept loudly along the surface of the waters, and said: 'When you arrive at Palodes announce that the great Pan is dead.'

"Not far from Palodes, Thamus turning his face towards the land, called out from the far end of the ship: 'Great Pan is dead!' Scarcely had he uttered these words, when a general lamentation issued from a multitude of voices on shore.‡ It is remarkable," added Lydia, "that this extraordinary circumstance took place, just at the time of Christ's death."

Metella listened to her slave with pleasure. After a few words of praise, she said: "It would be more in conformity with your

attainments, if for the future you attend to my head rather than my feet. I have therefore, resolved from this day forward, to make you my reader." This advancement filled Lydia with anxiety, being convinced that every preference excites envy, and that this would also draw down discontent. She, therefore determined, from that moment, to be more obliging and friendly than ever, towards her fellow slaves, well knowing, that an obliging manner blunts the arrows of envy.

"I know, also," continued Metella, "that I have to make reparation in some way for my unkindness towards you, a little time back. But to show you that I am not insensible to fine traits of character, accept this silver mirror, as your own property and dispose of it as you please." Lydia was too sensitive not to feel receiving payment for the trifling pleasure she had afforded her mistress in the parchment roll. To refuse the valuable present would offend Metella, therefore she accepted it with humble thanks, and gave her mistress to understand that she knew how to value the gift.

Selina witnessed this interview from an adjoining apartment, and could scarcely refrain, when she saw Lydia leave the room with her present, from recalling her late awkwardness again to the mind of her mistress, and from adding her charitable remarks.

The next day, Lydia entered upon her new office, and commenced by reading the *Apologia*.

"Is it not true," said Metella, "that the philosopher, Justin, was a follower of Epicurus?"

"Justin," replied Lydia, "is a philosopher, and if I do not err, he wears, at the present moment in Rome, his philosopher's cloak, and gives instruction in the Christian doctrine. He is a native of Neapolis in Samaria, and formerly gave himself to the study of Plato; but as it did not content him, he became a convert to the Christian religion. As such, he wrote his *Apologia* for the Christians, to the Emperor Antoninus Pius and the Senate."

"We'll now read. But first of all impart to me Justin's Christian ideas of God."

She commenced: *

"We acknowledge the true God, the Father of Justice and of all virtues, in whom there is no mixture of evil. We reverence and worship Him and His Son, who came down to instruct us, and also the Holy Spirit."

"This faith," interrupted Metella, "is without doubt, very different from ours. But still more unlike, and it is said even immoral, are the customs of the disciples of Jesus Christ."

Lydia read in answer, the following passage:

"Now let us relate in what manner we have dedicated ourselves to God, having been created anew by Christ. Those who promise to live according to the precepts of Jesus Christ are taught to pray and to fast, and to entreat from God the remission of their past sins, we praying and fasting with them.

Then they are conducted by us to a place where there is water, and are regenerated, being washed in that water, in the name of God, the Father and Lord of the universe, and of our Saviour Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Ghost. We there pray earnestly for them in common; and salute one another with a kiss; after which, to him who presides over the brethren, bread is brought, and a cup of wine mixed with water. And he having taken them sends up praise and glory to the Father of all things, through the name of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and employs much time in offering up thanks for having been deemed worthy of these things by Him: when he hath ended the prayers and the thanksgiving, all the people present express their assent by saying, Amen, which in the Hebrew tongue, signifies *so be it*. Then they who are called among us Deacons, give to each of those present, a portion of the bread and wine mixed with water over which the thanksgiving has been made, and carry away a portion to those who are absent. This food is called amongst us, Eucharist, of which no one is allowed to partake, but he who believes that what we teach is true, and has been washed in the laver (of baptism), which is for remission of sins and unto regeneration, and who lives as Christ has delivered.

* Justin calls this a punishable denial of Plato's better convictions. Virgil *J. Exhortations to the Greeks.*"

† Doctrine of Orphigens

‡ Ptolemy upon the fall of the Oracle.

* What follow are but fragments from St. Justin's renowned *Apologia*.

For we do not receive these things as common bread and common drink; but as both flesh and blood of that same incarnate Jesus."

"According to this," remarked Lydia, "we are taught, that as soon as the thanksgiving is pronounced over the bread, it becomes the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ, and passes over into our flesh and blood, to nourish our souls." "The Apostles," she read on, "in the memoirs composed by them, which are called Gospels, have delivered, that Jesus gave them this injunction: that, having taken bread and given thanks, He said: *This do in remembrance of me; this is my body*, and that, in like manner, having taken the cup and given thanks, He said: *This is my blood*."

"We have also, on that day, which is called after the sun, an assembly in one place, of all who dwell in the cities or country, and the memoirs of the Apostles, or the writings of the prophets are read. Then, when the reader has ceased, the president delivers a discourse, in which he reminds and exhorts to the imitation of these good things. We then all rise together and pray; and when we have ceased from prayer, bread is brought, and wine and water; and the president in like manner, offers up prayers and thanksgiving with his utmost power, and the people assent by saying, Amen. Those who are able, give money, according to their means. The president takes charge of the collection, and distributes it to the orphans, the widows, the sick, to those in prison, and to strangers: in short, he is the guardian of the oppressed.

This meeting is held on Sunday, because this is the day on which Jesus Christ, our Redeemer rose from the dead.

"So far as this appears to you truthful and reasonable, so give it due esteem. If it appears to you only empty talk, despise it. But do not condemn harmless men to death as enemies. But we tell you beforehand that as long as you persevere in injustice, you will not be able to escape the judgment of God. But we exclaim let it be done as it pleaseth God."

The learned Grecian listened to the *Apologia* with attention. She knew well the impression it had made on the noble Antoninus Pius, and that the Emperor had sent out orders to Athens, Larissa, Thessalonica, and other great cities, forbidding them to persecute the Christians. As soon as the *Apologia* was finished, the young Christian was obliged to answer numerous questions put to her by her mistress. For example, she required information on the life and miracles of Jesus Christ, and on his family. Above all, she admired the Founder of Christianity, on account of the calmness and greatness of soul, He exhibited in His agonizing death. "Formerly," added she, "such a death seemed more fitting for a malefactor, than for a great man. But Plato, who has also described the Just One, has taught me: 'Virtuous till death, he will be looked upon as perverse and unjust, and as such scourged, tormented and fastened to a cross.' *Since, I have made myself more familiar with this view of Plato, I am more reconciled with the sort of death that your God suffered." Though she had not the most distant idea of becoming a Christian, still the *Apologia*, which held the highest place amongst writings of that description, was a means by which she became more intimately acquainted with the Christian doctrine.

Lydia recommended her mistress to speak on the religion with the most learned men, and named for that purpose, the then Bishop of Athens, the pious Quadratus, whom the Church now reckons in the number of her Saints. She offered to make the humble Bishop acquainted with this wish, but said, if she preferred a conversation with a Christian philosopher, Aristides was one, and he also had composed an *Apologia* which, according to Eusebius, the writer of Church History, was to be found in the hands of many. There was also the renowned philosopher of Athens, Athenagoras, who had written a book on the resurrection of the dead.

Metella promised to think further on the matter, and for that day, put an end to the conversation.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SILVER MIRROR.

It is well known that the ancients were strangers to the luxury of glass mirrors, for the Phœnicians, afterwards called Tyrians, who first discovered the art of making glass, kept it a secret amongst themselves; and it could only be purchased from them, for its weight in gold. It is recorded that even so late as the time of Nero, it was so expensive, that this Emperor paid £50,000 for two small drinking cups of transparent glass.

The mirrors of those days were made of burnished gold or silver for the nobles; while the lower classes had to content themselves with highly polished baser metals, or by looking at their reflection in a vessel of water. Later on, as the love of splendor became the order of the day, mirrors were made as large as the human form, and were at last set in precious stones. A single mirror cost a lady more than a dowry, and the daughters of poor generals were provided with this commodity at the expense of the city.*

The mirror which Lydia had received as a present from her mistress, was of an oval form, and although it did not sparkle with precious stones, still it was one of great value. Looking in it one day, affected her with more than ordinary melancholy for her own features recalled forcibly to her mind, the calm but suffering countenance of her mother. Lost in thought, her imagination carried her to distant Rome, and placed her in a narrow cell, wrapt in the embraces of her captive parent. Returning to her sad reality, she exclaimed: "O, could I but know whether slavery or prison separates us, how gladly would this precious mirror be parted with, for thy ransom." At this moment she was interrupted by the friendly Ophne, who entered with a large parcel of ribbons, which she had just purchased.

"You look melancholy, dear Lydia," said she, "but I'll tell you something that will cheer you. The man, from whom we purchase our leather, has a grown-up daughter, named Aspasia; she is as light in her character, as she is handsome, and on this account she is known throughout Athens. Only think, Lydia, she inquired most particularly after you. She would like to know you, and if agreeable, would bring you into much company. But remember, she belongs to those of light character, or as others say, she is one of the noted persons of Athens, and if I had not a solemn dread of your morality, I could tell you much more about her." Lydia was silent, and the other continued: "I have heard of her for the last two years. Latterly she thinks of entering the married state, but she must first have a good sum, and as she cannot get this, she must go on in the old way." Lydia still preserved a dead silence, and Ophne receiving no encouragement said: "Now I must go to my mistress and show her these beautiful ribbons, and give her back the remainder of her money." †

An opportunity offers itself here to speak a few words upon the moral state of Athens, at this time. Still it is an ungracious task, to call up mouldering bodies to the light of day, and where would you come to an end? Therefore let this alone be understood, that the Athenians, immediately after the Persian war, put up a painting of Venus, under which was represented a procession of the Athenians, and below, the following inscription, written by the poet Simonides: "These called on the goddess Venus, and for the love of them, she saved Greece." Solon, himself, the Stoic Law-giver, caused a temple to be built to the shameless goddess; and in a short time, the entire of Greece was a scene of abominations. In Athens, honorable marriage no longer found a sanctuary. Vice was thus raised into a religion, and therein lay the worst and most horrible of all errors, of which the heart is capable.

From the time that our young Christian had received information of Aspasia, she made a firm resolution not to oppose the wished-for acquaintance. But how different were the motives

* Seneca's Meditations on Nature, 1st Book.

† At this period silk was as expensive as glass, and the Emperor Aurelius refused his Empress a robe of that material.

* Rousseau acknowledges, in his *Emil*, l. 4 'Plato paints here, Jesus Christ feature for feature.'

which drew them together. The one had the intention to destroy—the other to save. A few evenings later, Lydia and Aspasia were actually seen at the corner of a street engaged in deep conversation. Lydia was not a severe judge of morals, for she knew that the human heart, even if under the pestilence of temptation, it has lost blossom after blossom, still receives an impulse from God to bud anew, and like the barren fig-tree, which stood by the wayside, was not to be cut down immediately. She quickly discovered the untainted and redeeming qualities of the erring girl, and joined the better she advised, to the good already there. Several times she expressed a wish to hasten as much as possible, the marriage she had in view. Aspasia was touched with such rare kindness, and although she had no idea of becoming better, this language, which she heard for the first time, was to her heart, as refreshing as the nightly dew to a scorched heath.

During this conversation, one of Metella's slaves passed by without their observing her, and she could scarcely believe her eyes when she saw the young Christian speaking with a votary of Aphrodite. It was old Selina.

Her astonishment was still more increased on meeting the same party, some days later close to the Charon gate.* Aspasia's position, had so touched the heart of the zealous Lydia, that she turned over in her mind, day and night, how she could in any way assist the strayed sheep, and snatch her from the errors of her ways, or at least help to the sum necessary for her marriage. It occurred to her that the silver mirror was of more value than her pay for three years' servitude, and that at that moment, she could not dispose of it better than for the salvation of an immortal soul. Then she thought of her absent mother, and of the possibility, that the mirror might release her from her chains. But the trust she placed in Divine Providence, gave her confidence for the future, and decided her on parting with her mirror for the present emergency. Religion also suggested to her, that her love for an unhappy erring soul must not be inferior to that which she bore for her own mother. According to her resolution, the following evening, she carried her valuable mirror concealed under her cloak—one Eye alone witnessed the act, an Eye that knew and appreciated her intention. What a touching impression did not this present make! How expressively, and with what child-like simplicity did not the donor assure the receiver, that the mirror was not stolen, and how often did she entreat her to say nothing of the matter! Aspasia had not wept for years till then. She gave the promise to have her present converted into money, and to change her way of life immediately. There was now a sort of friendship cultivated between two souls, who, in word and work were without doubt widely different, but still resembled each other in tenderness of feeling.

After this act, a heavenly cheerfulness played in Lydia's eyes, and an interior happiness, the cause of which she imparted to none. In this silent enjoyment of her heart, she performed the daily duties of her state, at one time writing, and at another reading for her mistress, but while these occupations were going on she knew little of the judgment that was passing on in the house.

Selina had been long waiting for a favorable opportunity, to impart to her mistress in secret, an affair which as she said herself, not only threatened the reputation of the domestics, but also that of her mistress.—This opportunity at length presented itself.

"Not many days ago, noble lady," so began Selina, "I was an eye-witness to a detestable affair. Your wisdom will scarcely believe it possible, that one of your domestics has rewarded your goodness with the most shameful ingratitude. Others have labored for nearly half a century, to gain your favor, and have scarcely once received a present, while that black-eyed Asiatic, who is scarcely two years in your service, has the most valuable articles from your gracious hand. Young Lydia is just what we always suspected her to be. She had the courage to attach herself to a doctrine, which not only permits vice, but commands

it. These broods of hungry Christians assemble together in the holes of the rocks, they seat themselves on the bones of their slaughtered children, and devour their flesh. That the magpies sometimes steal money is well known, and I'll not enquire *what money* purchased the sheets of parchment, which were written on not long since for a birth-day gift. Her secret depravity of life, I have at last discovered, thanks to the gods!—Not long since, I saw her with a certain Aspasia, who is well known in Athens as the finest berry on the Upas-tree of vice—and later on, in the evening I met them again speaking confidentially with each other in the open square. What she whispered in that girl's ear, who is not ashamed to go through the market laughing and dressed in her suspicious-looking gay costume, is easily to be guessed at. Night increases the suspicion, and to this most suspicious person, by whom we shall all lose our reputation you make presents, and distinguish her above all your other slaves."

Metella at once perceived Selina's malice, and calmly replied: "Sophocles says: 'Silence is the ornament of woman.'—

"Where did you see Lydia?"

"At the end of the Hermos street, noble lady, at that place near Stoa's pillars, where stands Lucian's magnificent dwelling."

"Do you really believe," said Metella, "that Christians commit the worst crimes, like our *Œdipus*?"

"O yes! but with this difference, that *Œdipus* did not know what he was doing, while the Christians premeditatedly commit all sorts of crimes, and are forced to it by their priests. Before you, Lydia knows very well how to conduct herself, but let her have the ring of Gyges, which is known to make one invisible, and then, she will give herself up to all sorts of wickedness."

"One solitary cause of suspicion, is not sufficient. Selina, to punish the accused. If she be really guilty, it will quickly be discovered, then she can be scourged, and if that does not do, she can be put to death."

The last expression pleased Selina so much, that she ended this conversation by a lengthened encomium on Metella's severe sense of justice. As Selina herself was doubtful whether she should be able to detect Lydia again in the company of Aspasia, she ordered every slave in the house to have a sharp eye upon her. For this purpose, she related to them, all that she saw with her own eyes at Adrian's Stoa, and begged them to tell at the moment, if they ever discovered her with Aspasia. The good Ophne was zealously occupied in trying to persuade Selina, that there was not an atom of injustice or wrong in the matter. But in order that Lydia should be able to defend herself, she informed her of the reports that were in circulation about her. When Lydia received the information, she expressed herself in gentle terms, as follows: "I must remind Selina not to spread false reports concerning me; but for the rest she remained as quiet as before, and gave all to understand, that she did not bear the slightest revengeful feeling nor even a dislike towards her. "Sensitiveness," she used to say, "belongs only to little minds. A good sword and a pliable heart, will bear bending without breaking, but an untempered blade snaps when used in battle. To me the saying is as precious as gold: 'Act well, and suffer blame.' "It is possible," she added to herself, "that it was a ridiculous notion of mine to loosen the bands of a sinner; if Polycarp had met this sinner, she would scarcely have deceived him.* Possibly he would have called her in his short way, the first-born of Satan. Perhaps she is so, and that I have greatly deceived myself. But there are errors which tend more to the honor of man than to his shame; Yes—'more precious than wisdom and honor is a little foolishness for a short time.'† Therefore I shall be able to bear my error in this case."

Nevertheless she began sometimes to think the language of despondency—"You have lost your country, your mother, your master, your freedom," would she say—"One thing only remained of your temporal goods—your reputation—and this seems also to have vanished." But she would quickly reproach herself for this language, and call to mind how much the disci-

* St. Polycarp one day met the heretic Marcion, who asked him if he knew him. "Yes," said Polycarp, "You are the first-born of Satan."

† Eccles. x. 1.

* Charon so called because it led to the place of execution.

ples of our Lord had suffered. She would cast a look through her open window at the Areopagus, where St. Paul once stood and preached to the Athenians the "Unknown God," and say to herself: "What did not St. Paul suffer? Four times he suffered stripes, three times he was whipped with rods, once he was stoned, and at last ended his life by the sword: and shall I feel oppressed, when I receive an injurious word? Ought I not to tread joyfully in the blood-stained footsteps of my Redeemer, who was condemned by the Jews as a blasphemer, and by the Romans as a rebel against the authority of the State? Therefore, poor heart, seek thy consolation, not from the lips of thy fellow creatures, but from the sufferings of thy Creator and Redeemer!" In this reflection she found continued peace. Thus has the sight of our crucified Lord through centuries, comforted the oppressed and raised their courage: and as the dove, when chased by the eagle, saves herself in the crevice of a rock, so the persecuted heart flies from the calumny of the world, and seeks peace and comfort in the sacred wounds of her dear Redeemer.

Months had passed away, and Metella could discover no fault in Lydia, not even that she had become less friendly. When the old Selina, one day sought again to rouse the suspicion of her mistress against Lydia, by saying that her silence was a proof of her guilt. Metella lost all patience: "I know," said she "your venomous sting, and know also what to think of you. Guilt tries to defend itself, but innocence prefers to be silent."

Metella was perfectly convinced, from that moment, that there was no truth in the vile accusations against Lydia, and came to the conclusion, that just as her Christian slave was calumniated in her own house, so Christianity was calumniated in the world; and as she bore all these accusations with equanimity, nay even with cheerfulness, she won the increased affection of her mistress, who thought that Christianity was best known by the life of a good Christian; and the pagan esteemed it so much the more, the more beautiful the virtues were, that she saw practiced by her Lydian slave.

A few weeks later, Metella visited one of her friends, and saw, to her great astonishment, the silver mirror she had given as a present to her slave, lying on a small table. With an impatient curiosity, she sought to discover how her friend had obtained it. She said that it was brought to her by a certain person called Aspasia, and offered for sale.

So, thought she angrily to herself, my slave is really then in connection with this wretch! "O, I beg of you let the girl be sent for who sold it you! She will tell us how the mirror came into her possession." A slave returned in a few minutes with Aspasia, who related that a Christian girl made her a present of the mirror, on the condition that she would, without delay, enter upon a previously intended marriage. "This, and the petition of a Christian maiden quite unknown to me, that I would change my course of life, not a little surprised me, and I shed a flood of tears. Then I vowed to the gods to reform my life, and what I have vowed, that I will conscientiously keep."

Metella listened to this declaration, and felt abashed that even for a moment, she had suspected her virtuous attendant, who had borne so much in silence. She returned home, firmly resolved never to utter a sentence of what she had just heard. She acknowledged herself conquered by the virtues of a slave, for she could not believe herself capable of practising such greatness of soul. Yes, she even doubted if in all the heathen philosophy, a solitary example could be brought forward, to compete with the modest virtue of her Lydia, and was at a loss to know which most to admire, the delicate purity and patience, or the strength of character displayed in observing a profound silence in the midst of her persecutions. The last quality, bearing wrongs patiently, appeared to her without doubt, the pearl of Lydia's virtues.

How beautiful is chastity, when she lifts her clear eye to Heaven and feeds on the contemplation of her God! How admirable is meekness, that rewards hatred and contempt with prayers and charity. But it is not to be denied, that doubly to

be appreciated, as the queen of virtues, is silent innocence crowned with the thorns of calumny.

A few weeks after, while Lydia was reading, one evening, to her mistress, the sounds of music reached their ears; they found that it proceeded from the bridal party, which was just passing under the window where they were sitting. Both stood up to see it more distinctly, Metella leaning on the shoulder of her slave. The bride suddenly stopped and drew aside her veil:—it was Aspasia, who cast a look at Metella's palace, and perceiving her benefactress, waved her hand; then dashing a tear of gratitude from her eye, she covered her face again with her veil, and passed on.

Metella thought she recognized in the features of the bride, the girl for whom Lydia had so nobly suffered, and turning, quickly perceived by her slave's countenance, that she had conjectured rightly. Fearing to be questioned, and unable to disguise the joy of an approving conscience, Lydia asked permission to retire. She sought the solitude of her chamber, and kneeling before her cross, offered up a fervent prayer for Aspasia's perseverance in a virtuous life, and in gratitude to God, for having made her the humble instrument of drawing a soul from vice.

CHAPTER X.

NEWS FROM THE SEAT OF WAR.

The termination of the war with the Parthians, A. D. 166, brought with it a lamentable evil. The soldiers returning from the East, carried with them the plague, and infected all the provinces through which they passed. Even distant Gaul suffered under this pestilential devastation, and it was so dreadful in Italy; that in several parts, as contemporary writers relate, agriculture was abandoned, and famine had set in. In Rome, the dead bodies were conveyed out of the city in immense numbers and interred at the public expense. Athens also, and the whole of Greece experienced the horrors of this evil, in greater or lesser visitations which returned for several years together.

The cases of death this summer, were so numerous, that Metella determined at once to remove from Athens to one of her estates in the country.

Previous to her departure, letters from the seat of war were brought by carrier-pigeons to Aquileia, where they were detained and copied, as the delivery was doubtful. The originals were kept, and the copies attached to the pinions of these peaceful messengers, which were allowed to continue their journey to Rome or Athens, laden with the tidings of war.

By this means, Metella received intelligence from Lucius. Sitting one calm evening at her open window, occupied only with the thoughts of her absent son, she heard a gentle fluttering, and raising her eyes, she beheld the faithful little courier waiting to be relieved of its burden. With the letter in her possession, she retired to her apartment, to enjoy it undisturbed, where we shall leave her for a time.

The sun had sunk to rest; and night was closing in, as Lydia in her little chamber finished her task of writing. While the leaves were drying, she advanced towards her lightly-curtained window, opened it, and gave herself up to meditation.

All around is still, save the slight rustling caused by the waving of the palms, with their long and graceful branches, bending till they kissed the earth, and bounding back again upon the bosom of the jealous breeze. In the court-vestibule are heard the soft murmurs of the gurgling fountain. High in the wide expanse of Heaven, Night, the silent widow of the Day, is seated on her throne. Her face is hidden by a veil of stars, and her sable mantle hangs in graceful folds upon her darling universe. She illumines softly with her lamp, the moon, her plague-infected client, and bedews her with her widow's tears.

To return to Metella, who having finished her letter, leaned her head carelessly on a cushion and began to reflect on the contents. At length she closed her weary eyes, and sank into a gentle slumber. The letter which lay beside her, commenced

with the words: "From the camp;—Lucius to his beloved mother, health and happiness."

"Many months have passed since I have crossed the Alps and the clouds of heaven so near at hand. But, dear mother, believe me, that not a day passed without my thinking of you. I remembered you particularly, when first I beheld the Danube from Noricum.* You once read to me, as a boy, from a Roman Historian, that towards the end of the world, this river will no longer flow at the foot of the mountain, but will swell to the summit, tear up rocks, and carry with it chains of mountains. You can imagine with what ideas I reached this renowned river, yet notwithstanding its great breadth, I was still disappointed when I saw, that it was no wider than our flower garden at Kephissia. You have already heard how matters stood in our tedious war, before we reached Aquileia, and that the Marcomanni had gained a victory over the Prefect Vindex, who with twenty thousand Romans, was killed, and the retreating army pursued as far as the Adriatic Sea. This had all occurred previous to our leaving Athens. It is now nearly five years since the Emperor entered Pannonia,† and we have been waiting week after week, expecting to come to a decided engagement, which is to conclude the campaign. Our conquest over the Jazygan was accomplished in a droll manner. The barbarians held us at bay on the frozen Danube, trusting that they could fight famously on the masses of ice, their horses being much better accustomed to slippery ground than ours, but we threw our shields upon the ice, stood on them, and then drew over to us our horses and riders at once, and we fought a magnificent battle. Also in the two succeeding battles the Marcomanni and Jazygan were well humbled. Another time, when the Danube was free of ice, we wished to frighten the barbarians, and sent amongst them some lions we had just received from Rome. The animals crossed the stream, and attacked the enemy, who bravely met their antagonists, and killed them with their clubs, and stood laughing and exulting over their newly acquired booty.

You can scarcely believe, dear mother, how difficult it is to finish with such an enemy. The trumpets of war are to them an agreeable music; they entrench themselves behind their fortifications, and wait courageously for the attack. To fear, they are strangers. They tie up deserters to the enemy, but cowards, and those who take to flight, are suffocated without mercy in the swamps and morasses. But incomparably worse than all this, is their climate, which is so cold and damp, that we have a fog nearly every day. At home in Athens, months pass on, and the heavens cheer us with their clear blue, whilst in Germany, we find even in the midst of summer, scarcely a cloudless day. O how I now prize our clear Grecian climate! The fur cloak you have sent me by Bogus, is of the greatest service to me, particularly when we sleep in the cold damp. We fought our battles best in the hot summer days, for though the Germans bear hunger and cold with heroic patience, they succumb to thirst and heat much quicker than we do. Their food would not suit our Athenian epicures. Many of them are satisfied with crab-apples and thick milk. But if they had as much beer to drink, as they can take, we could vanquish them better by their drunkenness than by our arms. In their time of peace, they give themselves up to idleness or to the chase. The principal difference existing between the Romans and Germans, is that the former are masters in eating and the latter in drinking. Not long since, we discovered in a field a large mound, and on a nearer approach, we curiously examined it, and found beneath, huge stores of apples, pears and corn. Suddenly the ground gave way, and some of the soldiers fell into a subterranean cave, whence alas! they never more came out. We were obliged to leave them behind us, and discovered, when too late, that the Germans, with wives, children and cattle, frequently dwell in such caves, to protect themselves from the inclemency of Winter. Dear mother, would you could see these gigantic hardy men, one like the other! Their clothing, and the effects of the climate, render them unsusceptible of sickness. They generally die of old age. They

are trained up in such endurance and hardihood, that for the most part, they never spend a thought on either their clothing or their food. May those souls and bodies which know nothing of effeminacy, riches or debauchery, receive wisdom and well ordered armies. Perhaps, dear mother, you would like to hear a little about the religion of these barbarians? I regret, that up to the present time, I have been able to learn but very little on the subject. They have ancient poetry from time immemorial, and this is the only trace of knowledge they possess. They sing of a god, Tuisko, who sprung from the earth, and that he had a son, called Mannus, and these they style their ancestors. Also Mercury is held by them in great veneration, and they bring into their dark forests and sacred groves, all those taken in war, to offer them to him in sacrifice. The reputation they have gained for morality is well founded. A female may be as beautiful and rich as you please, but if her reputation be once sullied, she falls into general contempt. There are tribes amongst them that only marry virgins, and the widows after the death of their husbands remain single. Should a married woman injure her husband's honor by incontinency, the husband cuts off her hair, and whips her with rods out of his dwelling in the presence of her relations. This morality of the barbarians, dear mother, we do not find amongst our cultivated people. But I can assure you, that in our legion, in which there are many Cappadocian Christians, quite as great a morality reigns as with the barbarians. They are very industrious, they neither drink or swear, nor make what are called soldiers' jests. They believe in only one God, and pray to Him daily. Nothing is more interesting than to live amongst them.

"I suppose you have heard that Verus is no more? He was sitting in the chariot with Marcus Aurelius, when he was struck with apoplexy, sank on his shoulder, and expired. His body was not embalmed, but buried in the land of the barbarians. The day previous to his death, I had the honor, with some Greek nobles, of being invited to dine with him. I acknowledge, that I was not a little rejoiced at the invitation, after having been nearly five years without tasting a morsel of wholesome food, leaving delicacies out of the question. The banquet far exceeded our expectations; and not one amongst us could comprehend how it was possible in this country, to keep so luxurious a table. The Emperor was very gay and jested with me, asking me, as each dish was placed on the table, if I knew its name; to my answers in the affirmative, he always replied, "Ah! missed the mark!" and then gave the dish its German name: so that we always doubted what we were eating. Still more choice were the wines. Verus had three cups beside him, one was of Alexandrian crystal, the second of oriental Myrrha, a material unknown to any of us, the third was of gold, and set with precious stones. When we drank the health of the Emperor, he gave us a sign to keep our cups.* After wine, we played at dice till the morning dawned. Claudius Pompeanus, son of a Roman knight, was my companion at table. He was astonished when he heard my name, and assured me, that he had known you in Rome. That must certainly have been a long time ago, and when I told him that I intended to send you, my dear mother, a present of my valuable cup, he begged that I would afford him the pleasure of having some verses engraved on it.

"Bogus, who arrived here, two months since, and offered himself as volunteer in the cavalry, could relate to you what beasts there are in the dark forests. Not long since, he was dreadfully beaten through mistake. Being very cold he sought to bring down a bear for the sake of the skin. On our arrival at the camp one evening, after an engagement, Bogus, with some others, returned again to the hills, where we had left some dead bodies. To entice the bears out of the adjacent forest, he cut the head off a German, and seizing it by the hair, threw it down the hill, and it rolled to the edge of the forest, he repeated the experiment and at length he succeeded, for a hungry bear made his appearance. As soon as he attacked the heads, Bogus laid him low with an arrow. He stripped off the skin and clothed himself

* The land to the east of the river Inn in Bavaria.

† A part of the present Styria as far as Hungary.

* It is related that this Emperor once before presented his guests with a chariot each, and also with chariot drivers.

with it at once. So muffled up, he arrived at the camp towards dusk. The soldiers were taking their evening meal which consists of bread and cheese, and beer, a beverage, which the Germans prepare from barley and corn. Suddenly seeing something approach that had the appearance of a bear, they started up, rushed out upon him, and did not discover their mistake till he had been severely beaten. He was dreadfully injured and I doubt much if he will ever recover.

"But now, my dear mother, I must conclude; the cold prevents me from writing more. What should be nearer to my heart, than to assure thee of my unbounded filial love! O how great is the distance between thee and me?—yet my mind, that travels without the aid of bark or wing, is ever near thee. You are in the south, and I, in all probability, am on the northern boundaries of the globe. The human race has only extended itself as far as here. It may be possible, that after a few hundred years, these forests may be cleared away, and cities be reflected in the waters of the Danube; and that civilization will extend from one end of the world to the other. For the present, I believe with our poets, that Delphi is the central point of the earth, and that there mankind thinks and works longer and therefore they are more cultivated. What a secret, dear mother, lies in this growth of nations, and what an answer our mind receives, when it returns to the cradle of our origin, and asks itself as to the beginning and end of the world's history. But where am I?

"I hope a few months will see me return rich in years, in experience and in the deeds of a brave soldier, to give a lasting proof of my filial gratitude to thy loving heart. Farewell!"

Such were the contents of the letter that Metella had lying before her on the table. She is dreaming, she starts, and shrinks as it were from an invisible hand. She raises herself from her couch and quickly gives a sign for Lydia to enter.

"Have you not just heard the angry screaming of an owl?" said she, as Lydia approached. Lydia answered in the negative, and added that she had been standing at the open casement of her little apartment, listening to the playing waters of the fountain, admiring the majestic silence and beauty of the night.

"I must have dreamed then that I heard an owl cry—Do you understand the interpretation of dreams? Perhaps as a Christian you can explain to me the meaning of mine. Listen to me: After having finished reading my son's letter, I sank into a soft slumber. It appeared as if everything were dark around me. I wished to go forward, but I was without a light, and I could not find a road, because of the darkness. You were near me, and were my only guide. Over my head I observed a light, which gradually increased in brightness. This light proceeded from a mountain, at its foot was a flight of marble steps, which appeared to reach to the summit. I perceived at a great height a magnificent garden, in which were an immense number of female forms, clothed in white, and they appeared to be in constant motion. Far beyond these, I saw a most dignified being clothed as a shepherd, and seated on a magnificent throne. His appearance though imposing, had nothing in it to terrify. His throne was so high, that the white-robed multitude appeared far beneath him, while they with uplifted eyes gazed unceasingly on his loving countenance. His garment changed suddenly to that of a dazzling white, his heart was visible, round which were rays far brighter than the sun, which cast streams of light upon the worshipping multitude, who sank ever and anon upon their knees before him, and looked like little lambs round their shepherd. But what was most strange, at his feet I saw a youth who resembled my son Lucius, and who beckoned me to join him, a naked sword lay by his side, and he was reclining on his shield. Then a longing desire seized me to climb the marble steps. I pressed forward, but I felt as though my feet were bound to the earth. You then conducted me to the steps; but as I approached, a dragon, with eyes flashing fire and licking a deep wound on his left side, prevented my ascending. Retreating with horror, I perceived an owl perched on the protruding branch of a decayed tree; it flapped its wings and screamed angrily at me; my strength failed, I lay prostrate on the earth,

and awoke with the screaming of the owl still ringing in my ears."

"Now tell me what is the meaning of that magnificent being and the heart surrounded with rays; and why did I see my Lucius reclining at the foot of that shepherd?"

Lydia did not dare to trust herself, in giving the signification of this dream, and therefore answered. "My good mistress pardon me if I do not feel myself capable of interpreting your dream. I beg of you to request the explanation of it from those who are more capable than I am. According to your description, it was, perhaps, the Son of God Himself, who has revealed to you His magnificence. He was designated while on earth the 'Good Shepherd' and his followers flocked round Him like lambs. Once they beheld Him on the summit of a mountain and shining like the sun. But I am quite unable to explain the entire vision. We have in Athens holy men, true disciples of their Master, who know their Lord, and can tell you much of Him. They will also be able to explain your dream correctly.

"Do you believe Lydia," said Metella, "that the philosopher Athenagoras, who became a Christian, and who formerly visited me, would still consent to hold converse with, and advise a heathen?"

"Dear mistress, as a Christian he is more at your service than ever."

"Then if you think so, send to-morrow early and invite him. He is certain to be found in Plato's Academy; I meet him there sometimes, standing at the tomb of the immortal philosopher."

CHAPTER XI.

ATHENAGORAS.

Lydia was only too happy to convey Metella's desire for an interview, to the renowned philosopher, who cheerfully and promptly accepted the invitation, and at the appointed hour he found himself seated by the side of the illustrious matron. This learned man was as well read in polite literature, as in the Eastern and Grecian philosophy. He hung so ardently on Christianity, that some years later, he advocated the cause of the Christians with the Emperor Marcus Aurelius. A philosopher of the Eclectic School, he collected from all systems what agreed most with his ideas. He besought the Emperor to observe the same clemency towards the Christians, he exercised towards the religions of so many other nations under his sway. Metella commenced the conversation by assuring Athenagoras, that she did not belong to those who despised Christians, for she had often heard from her deceased father, that the Christian doctrine made those who lived according to its dictates, moral and happy;* and that lately she had an opportunity of becoming better acquainted with it, and her esteem for it was increased. She said that one of her slaves was a Christian, and she had often related to him about the Founder of her religion. "But yesterday, having had an extraordinary dream, which my slave would not undertake to interpret, I availed myself of an assurance she made me, that you would solve its meaning. It appeared to me as though I saw a shepherd, who was at the same time a king, in the midst of a host of beings clothed in white. I felt a holy awe before this shepherd, worshipped him in the distance, and felt that I loved him. O teach me to know him!" After having related to him her entire dream, she begged the philosopher to explain to her its meaning. After a moment's reflection he told her that he considered her dream as a favor from God and one which in every respect would carry that good with it, that from the present time forward, she would entertain a new interest for Christianity. From the details of her dream he took occasion to speak to her about Christ, who is truly the Shepherd of His flocks, and to describe to her the happiness of the life to come.

"Do you know," said he, "that that king is the only Son of

* Atticus was obliged to declare in writing to the Emperor Antoninus Pius his approbation of Christianity.

God, and of the same nature with the Father and the Holy Ghost. Are you acquainted with the doctrine of the unity of God in the Trinity?" Metella replied, "I know the Platonic doctrine of original existence; and I know also that Plato commanded us to swear by God, the disposer of all present and future things. I am aware also, that the Christians consider that the statue of Jupiter at Elis, with its three heads, has some signification. But allow me to say what I think of such doctrines. I think that no mortal is capable of comprehending the existence of the Divinity. Is not that a beautiful inscription that the Egyptians have written over the statue of the God at Sais,"* "I am the All that has been, that is, and that is to be, and no mortal has yet raised my veil."

"You ask me if I know the Christian doctrine of the Triune Deity. It could not have been explained to me in fewer words, than I heard it not long since, by a comparison from my Christian slave. 'God' said she, 'is one in His nature just like the tree; the roots, stem and branches of which are penetrated with the same existence. / As the stem proceeds from the roots, so is the Son generated by the Father, and as the branches of the tree proceed from the stem and roots, so does the Holy Spirit proceed alike from the Father and the Son.' But Athenagoras, how many things can be made clear to us by comparisons. Allow me to expatiate a little longer on my comprehension of the Divinity. Man is the world in miniature, his body is the picture of the earth, and his soul the reflection of the Divinity. Whoever has formed the human body has taken the earth for his model. We have a proof of this in our own members—our bones and flesh are of earth, our veins are the streams, the waters of which are called blood. The air is converted into breath, and in order that the sun and moon may enlighten all this, and be reflected in the human body, he has given us eyes. But one remark more, Athenagoras, and then I conclude. Of this magnificent body, this masterpiece of visible nature, an invisible spirit takes possession; governs it and penetrates it in all its parts, and this spirit is one. And so it may be one, and only one, who created this visible world, and this one we call Jupiter—Jupiter with his divine spirit and divine understanding. So you have another comparison, or if I may say so, more than a comparison—a proof of the unity of God."

"You are right," said Athenagoras, "and I participate in your views. We Christians, say also there is only one God, as the soul of man is one; but have you forgotten that this soul of man is a three in one?" "How so?" asked the heathen. "One" replied Athenagoras, "is the memory, another the understanding, and the third the will of man; and yet our thinking, understanding and willing though three, are only one."

Metella reflected—"O yes, I remember Plutarch also defended the three powers in man. If the soul be created after the image of God, so also can the Trinity be already in the Soul, an ordering, willing and loving God. Possible also that our own hearts are a reflection of the heart of that loving Son, who out of pity for sinful man, as you say, took our nature upon Him, and became the Shepherd of the people. But let us return to this shepherd whom I saw in my dream. O He looked so mild upon those who stood round Him! and so lovingly on my son, who clung to His feet! Tell me how did my Lucius obtain admittance into this divine company?"

"Perhaps," replied Athenagoras, "that your son, during this campaign, has made himself acquainted with Christianity, and has united himself with confidence to its Founder by which he enjoys undoubted peace and feels himself supremely happy."

"But what does this mean?" said she, "I saw him raise his hand and beckon to me so earnestly as if he would say. 'Come to me.' Durst then a heathen enter where those blessed beings are crowding round their King?" When he beckoned, he thereby expressed his happiness and a wish for you to participate. To attain the height on which Christ had His throne, two things deter you; and it appears to me that now I come nearer to the meaning of the vision. By the dragon that you perceived on one side, and the owl on the other; the first signified, according to

our books of revelation, no other than the origin of all evil, from the beginning of the world, whom we call Satan.* He tries to hold man down to the earth, leads him to sin, and tempts him to it, and those who give themselves to his service, he brings at last altogether in one place, where they are perpetually tormented like your Tantalus.† He also seeks to deter you, he does not wish that you gain Christ and the happiness of Heaven. The Redeemer has weakened the power of Satan, but has not entirely destroyed it; and therefore Satan resembles a wounded dragon, as you describe. But it is not he alone that separates you from Christ, there is also another hinderance which makes your union with Him difficult, and this is signified by the owl. Minerva, the goddess of wisdom, and the guardian of this our city, which is acknowledged to be the asylum of the intellectual, is represented by the owl. It signifies human wisdom, which is folly before God. Philosophy endeavors to acknowledge this contest, and would like to attain through its own strength, the altitude of truth. But for this its wings are too weak. O! how modestly Plato expresses himself when he says: 'One must bring together the best of human proofs, and then venture upon them as on a raft through the tide of life, but still he thinks one can sail more securely, and with less danger in a stronger ship on a Divine Word'‡ This divine word, Christ has spoken, and this firm ship is the Church."

"You must pardon me, Athenagoras, if just like an ignorant child, I ask you many things about your system. What did you mean when you spoke of a bad principle and of a Tantalus, tormented prepared for the wicked?"

"As the good," answered he, "will be one with God, the source of good, for all eternity, so must the wicked be with the father of wickedness, for all eternity, and for ever separated from God. As the reward of the good will be without end, so will punishment of the wicked be everlasting; and this is one of the most important dogmas of Christianity."

"In this respect," replied Metella, "Christ and Plato quite agree; both teach, that the good will be happy, and the wicked unhappy. Plato says: 'Those who have led a pure and well-ordered life, receive the gods as friends and guides, and dwell with them; while those, who on account of their greatness of crimes remain impenitent, sink their fate in the well merited Tartarus, whence they never more return.' But Plato mentions another place, Acheron, whither all the imperfect were sent. 'Those who are there' said he, 'will do penance for their faults, and when they are purified will be liberated'§ If then there are those different places, do you not believe that according to my dream, my son will one day be counted among the blessed? for you know I saw him near your God." "No doubt," replied Athenagoras. "And I," said Metella, "if I attend to the advice of Plato where he wills that no one shall change the religion of his ancestors, and remain a heathen, do you believe that I shall one day be received into the Kingdom of Light where my son feels himself so happy?"

"When you have once learned what Christianity is, and by the means of grace have acknowledged it as the one truth, then Metella, the Divinity and your own understanding will require from you to proclaim this truth openly, and not till this happens can you hope to attain this heavenly enjoyment; but if after this, you persevere in error through a vain fear of man, you will never be one of that company, in which you beheld your son."

"What, Athenagoras, do you think it possible, that a son could feel himself happy, if he thought that his mother were in eternal misery? Oh what a sorrowful happiness would that be for my Lucius, to know that his mother was in a place of torment!"

"As the rain falling into the ocean, partakes of the quality of

* Apocalypse, c. K-22,2.

† Tantalus tormented with a parching thirst bends to the wave which each time recedes from his lips and returns as he removes his head. *Odyssey*, XI, 5822.

‡ Seminas to Socrates in Plato's *Phædon*.

§ All these three states are taken out of Plato's *Phædon*.

* Plutarch *Is. 9*.

the water with which it mingles, so do the souls of the just partake so much of the qualities or the Divinity, and consequently of the love of justice, that they hate what He hates, and love what He loves, and it would displease them as much as God himself, if the wicked were to be rewarded with eternal happiness."

"I do not understand this exactly, but I think I can guess what you mean: that there is in the other life merely a relationship, either with the good or the wicked. But how could I avoid drawing down upon me the hatred of some one or other of the divinities, were I to worship the God of the Christians and thereby fail in my fidelity, to the religion of my ancestors?" "You speak now, Metella, of several divinities, which you confidently look upon as servants of the great Jupiter: there are no *gods*—therefore no hatred amongst the *gods*. You are still unable to attain the conviction that all power, in Heaven and on earth streams forth not from a plurality of gods, but from one God alone, and just in that respect is the difference between the faith of the Christian and that of the heathen. According to the views of the heathen, Heaven has its Jupiter, the sun his Helios, the sea its Posidon, the mountains their Naiades, the tree its Dryas, and even the reed its Syrx. On the contrary, according to Christian doctrine, there reigns in Heaven and on earth but one Almighty God, and the spirit of this same God shines forth in the sun, and moves upon the face of the waters. He has care for the tree and the flower, and forgets not in His fatherly protection, the smallest blade of grass. The thoughts of God are shed in millions of beams on all creatures, He is the center whence all proceeds. Yes, Metella, God is only one, and this one God requires from you, that you acknowledge Him with your whole heart."

"Beautiful and dignified as the doctrine is, Athenagoras, and though it agrees so much with my spirit, I feel myself as yet too weak to acknowledge it openly."

"Faith," continued Athenagoras, "is a gift of Divine Mercy: but to obtain this gift of Faith it is necessary that you should withdraw yourself from the pleasures and distractions of the world, and give yourself up to prayer in silence and solitude. Thus have all those done who strove after the Truth; yes, even the disciples of our own great sages. The voice of God allows itself only to be heard in the soul of man, when all is still; but if God has once commenced to speak, His voice is as loud and audible as the rolling of the thunder in a spacious and desolate mountain valley."

"Athenagoras can you answer me one question more? I see, that those who call themselves Christians are ready to sacrifice their lives for their Faith. With the cool blood of the Spartan, and the tranquillity of a Socrates, they undergo martyrdom and death for Christ. Whence comes this resolution, this living conviction?"

"You put questions, Metella, which convince me that this is not the first time you have spoken on Christianity. All those who seal their Faith with their blood, are fully convinced that Christ is truly the Son of God. Christ gave proof of His mission, as clear as the sun, often during life and particularly in the last days before His death. He told the Jews publicly that He was the Son of God, He said to them beforehand that He should be put to death, and that on the third day He would rise again. Yes, and He was brought before Pilate, and conjured by the living God, to say if He were really the Son of God*. He maintained it, although He knew that His death would follow the declaration. After his death His side was pierced with a lance, and His body laid in the grave and that grave was guarded by soldiers. But on the third day, as He had, already said, He rose again by His own power, appeared to His disciples, and showed Himself on many occasions to several hundreds of His followers. All those who saw Him believed in Him, and they preached Him to the world; and not alone those proclaimed His doctrine, but all whom He had strengthened, previous to His death, by

the numerous miracles He had worked. Therefore, as Quadratus the former Bishop of Athens^a declares in one of his writings, the sick whom Jesus healed, and the dead He brought to life were not a passing vision, for those very persons remained with Him upon earth, and some, added the same Bishop, lived not only after the ascension of our Lord, but even up to his own time. We all acknowledge this belief with joyful hearts, and it affords us comfort in this life, and a happy assurance of a better."

"Not so fast, Athenagoras, but so far you may rest assured, that I will follow your advice with regard to retirement, to help me in reflecting diligently on the dignified doctrine of Christianity, and daily beg of the unknown God, to whom you have drawn me nearer, that He will make Himself known to me."

CHAPTER XII.

THE COUNTRY SEAT AT ELEUSIS.

BEFORE the rich Domina arrives at her country seat, which bears the simple appellation "Theratron," or "Summer-Seat," we will invite our gentle readers to visit this magnificent Villa, situated at a short distance from Eleusis. It is only half a day's journey from Athens, and can be as easily attained across the Piræus and the sea, as by the so-called "Holy Street" or "Sacred Way." Outside Eleusis is a rich and well watered plain called the "Thiasische Field;" and although not a drop of rain has fallen for some months over this land, still the corn, refreshed by the night dews, stands in all its rich beauty, and the country has not yet exhibited that weary, desolate appearance, which in Greece returns every year, with the beginning of the second harvest. Upon this plain, stand various-sized statues of Pan,† twined with the Acanthus and wild flowers, which the artistic taste of the Greeks knew so well how to arrange, and which thereby diversified the otherwise monotonous appearance of this flat country. Countless numbers of sunburnt hands are everywhere occupied in collecting the gifts of Ceres, to store them up for the Winter. Here we meet beasts of burden, watering in the cisterns, and drawing their heavily-laden wagons. In the distance are to be seen herds of goats, feeding on the rich pasture; while the goatherds are playing cheerfully on their reed pipes. On the sides of yonder little green undulating mounds, long terraces are erected, for the cultivation of the vine, of that peculiar sort, which grows in Corinth, and the fruit of which is exported to different countries under the name of currants. On the top, are dirty little fellows, dressed in goat's skin, lying lazily about, under the shade of the elm-trees, and refreshing themselves occasionally with the first fruits of the vine. The higher hills towards the North, are covered with palms and other forest trees; and in the background, the scene is completed by the "Hoenzug of the Katharon" uniting itself to the rugged and light blue Parnassus with its cloud-capped summit.

Metella's charming Villa was situated on a gradually sloping hill: at the foot flowed the silvery waters of the Saramanta, on whose fertile banks flourished in abundance, the laurel and the dark myrtle and the slopes were studded with clumps of the Tamarisk and box-trees. The Villa was surrounded on every side, except that facing Eleusis, with groves of palms. From the centre of the building, rose a high turret, whence a charming view of the surrounding country could be obtained. On one side, the level plain opened to the sea, on whose shores, stood the rich trading town of Eleusis, in the centre of which rose, in imposing grandeur, the renowned temple of Demetrius, famed for the so-called "Eleusian Mysteries." Every year at the commencement of October, a great procession was formed at Eleusis: and four days previously, the festival of Demeter was celebrated

^a This Bishop Quadratus is not to be understood as the Quadratus of a later period. The above was the successor of St. Publius, and was appointed to the Episcopacy of Athens 125 years after the birth of Christ.

† Pan, the god of the fields.

* The High Priest said to Him: "I conjure Thee by the living God that you tell us if you are the Son of God." Jesus answered him: "Thou hast said it." Matt. xxvi.

at Athens. On the sixth day, the child of the goddess was, in the midst of rejoicing, carried out through the sacred gate in a wicker basket. Priests and officials accompanied the statue, and those in the procession bore agricultural implements and ears of corn.

On the seventh night of the festival, the form of consecration took place, and the vows of those about to be initiated into the Eleusian Mysteries were received. The charm of this worship lay in the mystery of it, in the lively dramatical representations, in the co-operation of all the arts and artistical enjoyments of music, song and dance, in the dazzling illuminations, in the effective decorations, in the most refined enjoyment of the senses, and above all in the promises of a happy future after death. If you ask in what these mysteries consisted, antiquity gives no satisfactory answer. It was strictly forbidden to reveal them, and whoever did so, had every reason to dread the punishment of death. Plato was suspected of guessing the mysteries, whereby we may infer, that the doctrine of his philosophy resembled that of the Eleusian. So far, it is certain, that the foundation of this ancient worship, which existed as far back, as the time in which the Ionians moved from Attica to Asia Minor, rested on a certain belief in a future state. "In the Eleusian," says Cicero, "one learns not only to live happily and holily, but to die with a cheerful hope." "Thrice happy," says Sophocles, "are those mortals, who have seen these consecrations, before they descend to Hades. For them alone is life in the next world, for others, only sorrow and afflictions." The more noble and refined were of opinion, that their happiness would consist in being constantly occupied in sweet devotion: but the greater number thought with Plato, that they would have a continual enjoyment of the senses, and endless intoxication. But we cannot be very far wrong in concluding, that those mysteries took their origin from the ancient Patriarchs, and that corrupt actions and doctrines mingled later, with the original true worship. No wonder then, if the ambitious Romans, such as Octavius, Adrian, Antoninus, and Marcus Aurelius, had themselves initiated into these mysteries. In Athens, according to Lucian, A. D. 176, there was but one man at that time, who did not belong to this worship.*

Westerly from Eleusis, expanding wide, are fields of rice, with its dark red blossoms, which add to the beauty of this flower-enamelled plain. Like a sheet of silver in the distance, shine the smooth waters of the lovely bay of Salamis, and the blue mountains of this charming island rise in majestic beauty, thinly veiled with the vapors of the sea.

To the East, is the "Sacred Way," that leads from Athens, and winds itself, serpent-like along the shore. Where it once lay, are now, in many parts impassible swamps. Here and there, at prominent points of view, could be seen magnificent monuments containing the ashes of renowned Greeks. Those tombs in the "Sacred Way," extend as far as Kerameikos, interrupted now and then by little oratories to Jupiter, Phæbus, Aphrodite, and to some of the great heroes; so that this scene transported the traveler to the "Via Appia," in Rome, so great was the resemblance.

How deceptive is the sea! It smiles at times as friendly as a lake. There was a day, on which the waters of Salamis ran red with the blood of the Persians. Thousands of them found their death in this bay—their iron, their gold, and the Eastern decorations of their generals, lie buried in its depths, whence no hand can draw forth the sunken treasures.†

To the present day the Greeks look down proudly from the heights of Salamis, when they think of the conquests of the ancient Hellenes, without which the entire history of Europe

would have had quite another aspect. And yonder, where now the light-hearted fisherman tunes his song, thoughtless of the past, once flourished on the shores of Corinth, the two cities Helice and Buris, which in one eventful day, vanished from the earth, and sank beneath that blue sea, leaving not a trace behind.*

To observe some order on our entrance to the Villa, let us first visit the Urbana or Castle, then the Rustica or Stabling, and lastly, the Fructuaria or Granaries.

The entire front of the villa, presented to the view a princely palace, built in the form of a hollow square, and bore a strong resemblance to Metella's mansion in Athens. The windows were of a transparent material, † and sheltered from the sun by framed blinds.

The gate-keeper was standing near the Corinthian pillars, which were twenty feet in length, supporting the vestibule, and beside him was a majestic watch-dog of the favorite Eperean race. The dog appeared to be a vigilant guard. Over the entrance was his likeness in Mosaic, and under it the following inscription: "Protect yourself against the Protector."

The entrance hall was profusely ornamented on each side, with numerous busts. To the right, were the ancestors of Atticus, on the left, those of Metellus. Those in Parian marble, and particularly the ones of more recent date, were finished in a style worthy of a Scopas or a Praxiteles. Peeping from behind the statues, were the laughing faces of lovely little boys, painted on the Lotus flower, with the finger on the lip, and with an expression of caution on the countenance, which clearly conveyed to the visitor, the idea, that the statues of those great men must be approached in silence. In another part of the Hall were copies of Polygnots, from the Stoa Poikile in Athens, amongst which stood the Philosopher Zeno, who, when living, might have been seen in that gallery of paintings.

Alabaster statues, crystal vases, large candelabra of white marble, numerous smaller figures in transparent stone, or the famous Corinthian bronze, stood here and there in this richly decorated hall. After having passed this hall, which ran right through the front portion of the palace, we enter the square court-yard which was enclosed on every side by the wings of the building, and with a treble pillared colonnade all round. What a mass of curiosities here present themselves!

Inside the fluted pillars, were to be seen a little forest of the choicest shrubs, varieties of grasses, cool mossy turfs and rustic seats. The centre of this square was occupied by a fountain, whose playing waters rose to an immense height, and falling again into an expansive basin, refreshed all around. In smaller basins, supplied by water from the fountain, were sparkling gold fish, sailing about in the cooling fluid, and turning to the sun in playful gamboling their fiery scales. Birds without number, warbling in the shrubs, and bathing in the cool waters of the fountain, completed the charms of this little paradise.

Over the grand hall which projected from the house, was a spacious dining-room furnished with slanting lounges, upon which those at dinner could recline at full length, leaning their elbows on a high cushion, and supporting the head on the hand, according to the ancient custom. Together with this dining-room the entire story was called "cœnaculum." The third story, except the Sacrarium, in which a light was kept constantly burning, was occupied by the slaves. It consisted of a number of little rooms, the front windows of which looked out upon the open country, and the back upon the court-yard already mentioned. Those looking towards the court-yard reached the floor and opened on a terrace which ran the whole length of the wing.

Independently of this court-yard, the edifice boasted of a second one, of the same size and somewhat further back, separated from the first, by an intermediate building, called the woman's department. In this second court-yard was an elaborately finished marble bath, sheltered from the sun by an awning. The

* As the Christian Emperor Valentinian, A. D. 376, forbid the heathens to hold their nocturnal solemnities. Prætextas, Proconsul of Greece, petitioned that the Eleusian Mysteries, might be an exception. The reasons he gave were, first that without these mysteries, the people would lead a comfortless life, a life that would be no life, because it would be deprived of those ceremonies which were a symbol of a future and everlasting life. Second, that to separate the life of man from the comforting belief of a future, was only to be compared to a living death.

† On the last day before the final battle, Themistocles took three captives, nephews of Xerxes king of Persia. At a sacrifice not long after, he drank a quantity of Oxen blood to which Plutarch ascribed his death.

* This event took place A. D. 370.

† A mineral called moonstone was used by the ancients for windows, previously to the invention of Glass.

pavement round the bath, was Mosaic, and represented animals, fruit and flowers. Generally speaking, the principal floors of this Villa, particularly of the reception rooms, were of Mosaic workmanship which had the advantage of keeping the apartments cool.

We next visit the out-offices, adjoining the palace. What most attracts our attention in those, are the numerous rows of windows. This portion was occupied by Metella's male slaves, who had the charge of the flower gardens, meadows, olive gardens, and flax fields. Under this dwelling were the stables, the doors of which we only open hastily here and there. They were filled with an abundance of horned cattle, horses and a sort of black swine, with soft shiny skins, such as can be seen at the present day, lying about in the streets of the Grecian cities. Then again there were vaults for hares and rabbits, and others for geese, turkeys, and all sorts of poultry.

After this, follows the "Villa Fructuaria" which excites in many respects greater interest, for it contained large and various wine cellars. In the back cellar were several goat skins filled with the wine, so much valued by the Greeks, called Lesbos, these were sealed with pitch. Rhodian and Lydian and also the beloved Falarian were not forgotten. Other cellars of the Fructuaria contained stores from Metella's olive gardens, which were partly delivered to the great merchant ships, and partly sold at the new Market of Athens. The store-rooms for corn, hay and garden fruits, occupied a large space in the Fructuaria and enclosed off this part of the Villa. Lastly one look at Metella's garden. It may appear strange that two hundred years after the birth of Christ one met with the same artistic ornaments, which are to be seen in the nineteenth century particularly in France and Holland, where the tasteless custom prevails of cutting one tree like a pyramid, another like a Lion, and a third like a crowing cock, so that one imagines he is entering a menagerie rather than a pleasure ground. The peacock, the favorite bird of the ancients, struts about here in all his pomp, and proudly swings his tail on high and spreads it out in the form of a fan. The villas of the rich are a clear proof of the extravagance of Greece, which with sculpture and all works of art, gave occupation to the greater number of the half-freemen.

Every flower-bed had its peculiar attendant, a white or colored statue. The flowers change according to their species, and their quantity and variety would have embarrassed a Greek of ordinary education, to name only one of these children of Flora, so foreign were these plants to that country. The ever blooming gardens of Egypt provided nearly all the country villas of Greece, with bulbs, seeds, and cuttings. Italy also sent her charms here—a soft breeze waves its balmy perfume from the flower-beds of Sicily, and Metella's garden offers you a bouquet of Spikenard, Myrrh, and the lovely *Acanthus*.

CHAPTER XIII.

TOM POTTER AND HIS CHILD.

In a magnificently gilt chariot, drawn by white horses, Metella drove up to the entrance of her Villa. Could we then have seen the number of her attendants, standing on the marble steps, and the majestic form and haughty look of this noble dame, as she gracefully ascended, recognizing neither to the right nor to the left, a single slave amongst those who stood in crouching servility, with arms crossed on the breast, to welcome her arrival, a doubt would have passed through our minds, whether this proud lady would ever tread the thorny path of our Faith.

But Divine Providence has always means at hand to humble our pride. As the autumnal winds strip the trees of their withering foliage, and mingle it—aye that of the mighty oak, with that of the meanest shrub, and leave them bare and desolate till the coming Spring, so, the Providence of God is wont to blow away with the winds of affliction, all the vanities of man, and level his proud heart to the dust, leaving it for a time, empty, desolate, and bereft of all consolation.

We see here but slight grounds for supposing that Metella will ever become a disciple of Christ, or a lover of self-denial. Yet a few days later, she made a slight beginning, by a sort of condescending benevolence of which we shall give an example.

On the following morning, after her arrival, as she was walking in the court-yard, and fanned by her maid with an artistically woven peacock's tail, she saw, at the end of the interior court, which was somewhat hidden by an ornamental shubbery, a poor, but very cheerful old man, sitting near the kitchen door. His flowing hair, and peculiar woolen mantle bespoke him to be a sort of artisan.

He is a potter by trade, and his name is Hyllos. While sitting on the cool Mosaic pavement, and leaning against a pillar, he little thinks that a stranger is observing him closely.

Poor Hyllos had just brought to the palace, some kitchen utensils from his work-shop, and had ardently hoped, that he would have received payment for them on delivery. But it was not so, and after his long walk, he had only received a piece of dry bread from one of the cooks. A little annoyed, as he had not had anything to eat that day, he seated himself down close to the kitchen, and commenced talking to himself. "Well Hyllos! but you are a poor, pitiful old blockhead! you have overworked yourself the whole week, and now you have nothing more for your trouble, than a bit of dry bread. Oh, hunger bites! but stop! you growling old fellow! don't you smell an amazingly good odor from the kitchen? what more do you want?" and, taking a long sniff, "oh! tit bits, roasted or steamed! ah! if you were not a discontented rascal, you would be satisfied with your share of the feast!" So saying, he took his bread from his bag, and with a long draw, sniffed up the good smell, and then ate his morsel of bread, and after a pause, as if to test the quality of taste and smell, said: "Of course you've had a good dinner!—You old fool, to be grumbling for nothing! Why the bread dipped in the smell from the kitchen is quite another thing. Ah! we have only to sop it in the delicious broth of a healthy imagination, to enjoy it with an understanding." He repeated the bite and sniff several times, and by the help of his imagination, began to feel himself not only satisfied, but satiated—so much so, that he seemed to fear it was amounting to gluttony, and rising from the ground began to admonish himself.—"Come, Hyllos, don't gormandize, you have had more than enough for this day," and throwing his bag over his shoulder, commenced his journey home with a cheerful countenance.

Metella was forcibly struck by the piteous scene she had just witnessed. This poor man thought she, is contented with the odor that proceeds from the food preparing for my table. What wealth lies in contentment! and yet what wealth can purchase it?—She firmly resolved to visit the poor man without delay, in his own humble dwelling.

It was on one of those hot dry harvest days, such as are often experienced in Greece, when the heat of the sun, the wind, and the sandy dust, vie with each other which shall conquer, when Metella gave orders for her favorite slave to hold herself in readiness for an evening walk. Ophne brings with her a long handed sun-shade which with the ancients played so important a part, and which has been handed down to the Greeks of the present day in a smaller form. She cannot help feeling anxious whether she will be able to move it about with the necessary agility, in order to protect her mistress as well from the rays of the sun, as from the thick clouds of harvest dust. She consoled herself with the reflection, that latterly her mistress had become far less sensitive, and that very day, during the entire walk, she did not hear from her a single complaint.

"Ophne," said Metella, as they had been walking for some time in the hot valley, "do you know the house of poor Hyllos, the potter of Corinth, to whom I sent Lydia not long since?"

"He has a little sick boy and if I do not err, yonder is his poor clay-built dwelling. I should like to visit the old man and give him a little present."

Ophne was not a little astonished to hear from her gracious Domina, that she was going to the house of a poor potter, and to

bestow a charity with her own hands. "Undoubtedly," said Ophne, "Hyllos dwells there on the other side of the moor. He was once well off, and used to provide the potter market at Athens with his goods. But since he has become old, his strength and activity fail him, and he finds great difficulty in supporting himself. In addition to his poverty he has a child to provide for, whom he also instructs in his trade, and in the rudiments of reading and writing."

Hyllos, who was just then in the work-shop finishing flower-pots, saw the gracious lady with her slave, while they were still at a good distance, and hastened to thank her as she was passing by, for the many blessings she had sent him lately. But how great was his surprise, on seeing her approach his humble dwelling. She entered smilingly and enquired after himself and his son. The little Askanus, who was scarcely six years old, sat in a corner on a broken flower pot, and held in his arms a young rabbit, which he was sleeking down with his hand.

"Are you contented Hyllos?" asked Metella, and before the potter could give an answer, Askanus frightened his little rabbit away by whispering in his ear. Are you contented she asks. Then the child ran behind the wooden pillar or support of the house and every now and then stole a glance at the lady, when he thought he was unobserved.

"What have you had for dinner to-day Hyllos?" asked Metella. "A cake of bread madam, onions and watercresses, a little salt and a drink from the wind-pipe fountain in the pine forest."

"You have a sick boy I heard lately, how is he?"

While the potter commenced to relate all the particulars of his child's illness, the little fellow sought to conceal his face behind his bound up arm. Metella then called the little boy from his hiding place. He approached the strange lady bashfully, and endeavored by retreating slowly to hide himself behind his father.

Metella drew from her girdle pocket, a piece of gold, and held it up before the boy. At the sight of the gold all embarrassment vanished, and calling his healthy arm into action, he eagerly seized the offered gift. The tears of the potter showed Metella the joy she had afforded a poor old man. He continued to relate how his little son's malady had fallen into his hand and arm, and that the doctor declared amputation was indispensable.

At these words, Metella showed a decided repugnance to the operation. "Yes, yes," said little Askanus, "the horrid man said that, and went away, but shortly after the good Lydia came and brought me a large sweet almondcake." Metella laughed at the childish prattle, which brought to her mind that of her darling Lucius at the same age.

"And then," continued Askanus, "the good Lydia said to me that cutting off my hand would not be so dreadful, and that she would come herself to me, that it might not pain me so much."

"And then did the good Lydia really come to help you?" asked Metella. The boy nodded silently and began to cry.

The old father answered for him, dried his tears, and said: "O, of course, gracious lady, or we could not have gone on with the operation, if your servant had not helped us. To us poor people, such a help comes seldom. I am a poor, ailing old man, and I could not possibly have held the boy, when he put his hands imploringly together, begging that we would not hurt him. How also could a father look on at a sharp knife passing through the arm of his dear child? I still tremble at the remembrance of it. O no! your Lydia kept her word, and came at the stated time, and was here before the doctor arrived."

"Yes," added Askanus, "and brought father a couple of red herrings, and some grapes and sweet seed cake."

"But still sweeter were the words of comfort," continued the old man, "that she brought to the sorrowful father and his child. Ah! poverty seldom finds a friend! but the few friends it does find, are as true as gold for they do not love us for the sake of gold or honor, but for one's own sake. Such a friend your servant had been to us. When the doctor began his work, she told the boy to be firm, and held him during the entire opera-

tion, with a heroic courage. How affectionately she wiped the perspiration from his brow, and how piously she prayed to the highest God! For she had other gods as well as we, and called the highest God—not Father Jupiter, but God the Father, and his attendant gods—not gods, but angels. Then she repeated so often to the little fellow, 'patience, only another moment's patience, we have just finished!'"

Metella felt herself touched by this description, and a sensation passed over her cheeks like a cool breeze, but as old Hyllos was about to show her the arm, that she might see how nicely it was healing, she quickly gave him a sign not to remove the bandage. "No, no, Hyllos, let it be, we must go now."

Askanus stood quite close to the strange lady, and his little rabbit jumping about at his feet. The boy looked embarrassed, first at his little pet, and then at Metella, and on his blushing cheeks could be read that he had something else to say. He cast an enquiring glance at his father, and twisted his fingers in his nut-brown locks.

"Well little one, what is the matter, now?" enquired Metella in a most amiable tone. With increasing confusion, the boy stooped down, took his dear little rabbit on his arm, and thinking the lady would be pleased with a present of his favorite, offered it to her. She accepted the little animal, gave it to Ophne to carry, patted the boy on the head, and hoped that Heaven would always preserve to him his good heart.

Had Ophne been told that Thirax had become a giant, she would have believed it sooner than that Metella had become condescending, but seeing was believing and her own eyes were witness to the fact. At the commencement of the scene, she was seized with convulsions of laughter, which she concealed with difficulty from her haughty mistress. This was soon changed into silent admiration, and ended with veneration and love. Metella on her way home was lost in thought, which allowed her lively little slave to indulge in her own reflections also. The tongue not being called into action, left the thoughts a double duty. The interview she had just witnessed filled her with admiration and astonishment. The *self* that twines round her best thoughts and actions intruded here. Dear Lydia is so perfect, thought she to herself, that everything I did contrary to her notions of right and wrong, I was snubbed for often enough in the day, but mercy on me, what is to become of me now, when my Domina begins the same sort of life! It will be, Ophne don't be too curious—Ophne, keep your temper—Ophne, a silent tongue is an ornament in a woman, till at last, poor Ophne might as well be one of the statues in the pleasure ground, looking at every thing and saying nothing. Well, I think one Mentor is enough for any poor slave, and I am quite satisfied with Lydia. However too much thought injures the health, and I shall have plenty of time to think of the troubles when they come; so casting off care, she began to fan her mistress with redoubled zeal. But to return to Metella—This evening her respect for Lydia, whom she usually called the bee of Hymett, on account of her many acts of virtue, rose higher and higher. She felt an ardent desire, not only to be esteemed by such a soul, but to be ardently and sincerely loved. Though she believed her slave was attached to her, still she thought that she was not tenderly beloved by her. In any case the love that she received from her was not of that enthusiastic expression which she looked upon as true friendship. Then reflected on the two sorts of benevolence, which the poor potter had received through her and her servant—I gave him gold, said she to herself, a small gift, which has made me nothing poorer, Lydia on the contrary, had no gold to offer, but she gave what was more valuable, her personal services. I would rather have given the unhappy father ten pieces of gold, than do for him what she did, and therefore her acts of benevolence are far greater than mine, and certainly before God her work has by far a greater merit. O, if I were so ardently and sincerely beloved by her as that child of Hyllos! The old man was right; friendship to the poor is without self-seeking, but the more riches and earthly greatness raise us, the more reason we have to mistrust the love of man. The higher those lofty mountains raise their heads, the more densely are they enveloped in fog and va-

por, while the darting rays of the genial sun, pass them by unheeded, to reflect themselves in the modest valley. What signifies this bowing and cringing servility bestowed on us by mortals like ourselves, when we don't possess either a true friend or a single heart to love us? Such reflections rendered her melancholy and dejected, for when she looked back on her past life, she found that all her good works grew on no other soil than that of her wealth, and because those riches were not her own merits, but at the most, the mere possessions of her ancestors, it appeared to her as though she had passed a useless life. She therefore saw herself in effect poor in good deeds, and a feeling of shame and sadness took possession of her. It appeared to her that great souls must think little of her as she had nothing else to offer for another life, but fleeting treasures. Then she understood for the first time that there could be that man who would look upon riches as an imperfection, and that the Gospel was right in connecting perfection with a renunciation of temporal goods. Even a Roman noble, Minutius Felix, expressed the same sentiments. Whence all at once would such an honor come to the poor, that the greatest among the inhabitants would visit them, and try to comfort them?

The rich matron does this merely because she begins to experience a pleasure in a doctrine, that commands us without distinction to love every one as we love ourselves, still more willingly would she hasten to the poor, if she knew who He is that says: "What you do to the least of these my brethren, you have done to me."

So poverty in the Christian world, has quite another position, than that which it had in the pagan. Poverty gives virtue a patent for nobility, love, vassals, and in the naked God-Man on the cross, she beholds her oldest and most renowned Ancestor. The poor themselves have at all times acknowledged this privilege through the Redeemer, and have therefore been from one century to another, the most affectionate and faithful children of Christ and His holy Church.

CHAPTER XIV.

SAD INTELLIGENCE.

In a shady part of the extensive garden, is a bower formed of majestic palm trees, and their projecting branches fall in graceful profusion over the arched roof, and mingle in pleasing contrast with the lighter green of the Acacia, and the blooming roses of Pæstum, which with their full buds insinuate themselves through the dark foliage of the interior.

In this lovely spot, surrounded by a wilderness of beauties, was Metella, reclining on a soft couch, and taking her morning repast. Close to the sofa, sat Lydia, reading to her mistress. She held a portion of the Gospel of St. John in her hand. Although the early Christians carefully preserved the Gospels from the heathens, still Bishop Quadratus allowed Metella to read all their religious writings. At her feet, on the skirt of her robe, lay her little Maltese dog. It had its little brown paws stretched out at a full length, on which it rested its tiny black nose, and settled itself snugly to sleep. Selina is seen approaching up the shady walk accompanied by a sweet looking boy. She carries in her hand a perforated silver fruit basket, in which are beautiful peaches arranged on fresh vine leaves, and surrounded with blue and yellow figs, and Arabian dates. The boy carried a fine towel of Pelusium linen on his arm, he held in his right hand a tankard, and in the left, a massive golden cup. Behind Duranus stood little Thrax, bearing a muscle-shaped dish of rose colored Sardonyx, filled with clear ice. All were laid on the black marble table; the slaves bowed themselves backwards with arms crossed on the breast, and retired.

"My Lucius is a good son," said Metella taking the golden cup in her hand. "He sent me this cup lately—the present of the Emperor Verus, and he begged me to use it daily until his return. Also Pompeianus, whom I knew in Rome, and who now fights on the Danube with Lucius, guessed what would

please me. He has had some words of comfort, touching the death of my beloved husband, engraved on it. Before you pour in the beverage, you may recall the verses to my mind."

A midst the busy hours of life's routine,
Oft hast thou joyful raised the veil, and seen
Laborious Tyke, graud in her gilded plough
With toilsome pain, thine acres furrow through.
Thus sufferings mix with state, and through the mind
Wail in sad accents, like the moaning wind.
Death forc'd thy noble spouse from thee to part,
And in the dark tomb sleeps his faithful heart.
Metella still thou'st joy amidst thy grief,
Bloom to thy cheek, and to thy heart relief:
Ah! may not that joy thou'st gained be brief,
May Lucius' face thine eyes delight, for there
Strength, courage, virtue, in bright traits appear,—
Proud ornaments of that afflicting bier.

After Lydia had repeated them, she poured the red wine into the cup, and dropped in a few crumbs of ice to give it an agreeable coolness.

Lydia related as an introduction to the paragraph, that she was to read that morning, that Jesus returned willingly to His friend Lazarus, who lived at a short distance from Jerusalem. Lazarus was at one time dangerously ill, and his afflicted sisters, Martha and Mary sent a special message to Jesus, to obtain His divine assistance for their sick brother. After this introduction she began to read the touching account of the raising of Lazarus, and added that this resuscitation stood in close connection with the imprisonment of our Lord.

This wonder, and the solemn reception of Jesus into Jerusalem, roused the envy of the High Priest, and the death of our Redeemer was the result. But just as Lazarus was only a few days in the grave, so our Lord was but part of three days in the tomb, when by His own power He rose from the dead. So will our souls be united to our bodies, never to be separated. The hope of meeting again is a consolation to us, when standing by the side of those graves that contain all we loved on earth. While Metella interrupted her frequently with questions, she perceived that in front of the garden, coming towards her with hasty steps, was a man of rank. As he approached, she recognized him as her old domestic friend Pausanias and her father's most grateful disciple. He commenced with an agitated voice to say, that the Proconsul in Athens had just received news from the seat of war, and that the conquest of the barbarians was at last completed; which conquest was particularly attributed to the bravery of the "Legio Fulminatrix," which many Greeks had joined. The wonderful assistance of the Divinity was everywhere spoken of, without which, the whole army must have succumbed to the savage force of the barbarians. Also news of Lucius, who fought bravely was contained in the accounts to the Proconsul. He had scarcely said these words, when with extraordinary haste, he drew forth a note, and laying it on the little table, took his immediate departure.

"News of my son?" asked Metella and cast an anxious look upon Lydia.

"Probably joyful news," replied she, "for he fought bravely. I scarcely dare break open the note; Pausanias departed so quickly, what can it signify? I tremble! O withdraw to the shady walk and pray to your God for me. In the meantime I will occupy myself in a few minutes with my darling Lucius." Lydia obeyed. "The opening of that little missive can give me unbounded joy or plunge me into the deepest grief!—There it lies in prophetic silence, bearing in its simple folds, a secret to me, yet, the knowledge of which may for ever dash from my lips the cup of joy—It still says nothing, and yet contains what?—perhaps more than I shall live to bear."

The longer she delayed opening the missive, the greater became her anxiety. Pausanias stood ever before her;—his mien, his confused look, his hasty departure, were all doubtful omens. She seemed incapable of thought, not even one to Him on high, to grant a gracious termination to her melancholy fears. "My darling son, what shall I know of thee now?" and with one desperate struggle, she broke the seal.

A considerable time had passed, and Lydia heard no sound,

she began to look impatiently towards the arbor. She heard the little dog barking piteously as if he had been hurt. Whining, and with sunken head and soft steps, the little animal ran along the walk, and scarcely had he joined Lydia, when he began to retrace his steps, drag his tail along the ground, and now and then looked back to see if Lydia were following. Lydia concluded that the dog's howling signified something, and she resolved to return, though uncalled, and drawing aside the branches, looked into the arbor, and uttering a cry of horror, exclaimed:—"My dear, dear mistress!" She entered, and called her again and again by name, but received no answer. She then raised her head gently, but her eyes were still closed, and she held in her half open hand, the little missive. Lydia now guessed all. The deadly paleness of Metella's countenance told her the contents of the letter. Lucius was slain! At this moment a feeling pervaded her entire frame, to which she had hitherto been a stranger, since her painful separation from her dear mother.

Placing Metella's head upon her arm, she took the napkin from the table, poured on it a little wine, and with it chafed her lady's temples. The little dog sprang anxiously upon his mistress, and dragging with his paws endeavored to arouse her. Lydia knew that a cry for help would be useless at this moment, she therefore remained supporting the head of the afflicted mother, awaiting the return of her senses.

The good slave continued long in this position, anxiously looking for a change. She pressed Metella's head to her heart with tender affection, that she might once in her life have the happiness of being near her. At last she observed her breathing softly, and her eyes gradually opened.

Metella cast a vacant look around, and knew nothing of the past, but inquired if she had been dreaming. Lydia answered: "No, dear mistress, it is only a little weakness that will quickly vanish." She then offered her the golden cup, and begged of her to drink. The lady sipped a little, and looked inquiringly in Lydia's eyes.

"My child, I believe you are crying? Say, has anything happened to you? Ah! I feel as if I should cry with thee! O let me rest a little on thy arm!"—"Has not some one been here with us?"—She asked, after a long pause;—"Was there not a stranger here, and I imagine he said something about Lucius? O yes—I remember now—he said that all was well with him."—Lydia turned aside to conceal the bitter tears that flowed without ceasing.

"Child," said Metella, "why are you silent? Why do you not help me to remember what is passing?"

"Lucius fought bravely—of course he fought bravely, or he would have been an unworthy scion of a noble stem! But—there is a something more.—Some one spoke of defeat. Lydia, why are you silent?—again this letter! Lydia, am I in my senses, or does this letter speak of my son?"

Lydia dares not trust herself with one look, but supporting her dear mistress still on her arm, remains motionless. Metella again seized the note, and with a fixed gaze reads on. "My child fallen? Lucius slain? The desolate widow without a son! The hope, the joy of her widowed life, to come no more! Is she then never more to hear that voice again? that buoyant step that spoke the gladness of the heart, that honest tongue, its truth speaking from his flashing eye! that docile will bending always in obedience! and does that loving filial heart beat now no more? Alas poor Mother, thy only hope is slain! Thou hast nothing more to love! All, all is desolation here," placing her hand convulsively on her beating heart. "The link that bound me to this fleeting world is broken! I have nothing now to care for!" Metella was roused from her anguish by a voice outside the arbor weeping like a child. A little form sought to get a glimpse between the foliage, it was the Thracian dwarf, the most faithful follower of the fallen Lucius—little Thrax—Then came Ophne, and cast herself at the feet of her afflicted mistress, pressed her robe to her face and sobbed aloud. Thrax hid himself behind her, and took the letter from the table. He appeared by his imploring countenance to ask if he might read it. Metella by a slight inclination of the head gave assent, and he and Ophne were motioned to

leave the arbor. In a few moments loud lamentations were heard through the villa, for Pausanias had informed the gate-keeper of the news he had brought. The letter that the dwarf took from the arbor, passed from hand to hand, but no one ventured to approach Metella, who had just been carried to her apartment by her sympathizing slaves.

After the violent grief had a little subsided, Lydia sought to stammer out a word of consolation, but as often as she tried to speak, her voice failed her. Metella saw that her affectionate servant wished to console her, and she discovered in the midst of her sorrow, that her wish to be loved by Lydia as a dear friend was more than fulfilled. It was difficult for Lydia to utter a word; "dearest lady," said she, "your suffering is great, but you do not bear it alone—those who know the secrets of thy noble soul suffer with thee, and share this pain with an intensity that you would scarcely credit." By her affectionate attention she changed her mistress' pain into sorrow, and the tears began to flow."

"My eyes," said she, "will become a dried-up spring."

"Till the God of comfort," added the Christian slave, "makes the eye clear again to see the dear departed one. Between the present and that moment, there is only a little space, then the mother will be united to her child: what a treasure of comfort, my dear mistress, lies in this truth?"

"Did I not believe this," replied she, "my grief would annihilate me—I am fully convinced of the immortality of the soul. O, it is a melancholy Religion that places in the hand of a sorrowing mother, the shroud of her son, and in it buries her last consolation. The belief of again seeing the lost one"—and suddenly starting up, she continued, "Lydia, Lydia, my dream! perhaps Lucius was then dead."

"And at that time already happy," replied Lydia, "for he was reclining near Christ, the Son of God, and that same Christ that gave back to Martha her brother, who had been four days dead, can also heal thy wounds and give thee back thy son."

"I wished to go to Christ when I saw Him, but I was not able, you sought to help me, you were also too weak. Who will lead me?"

"O if I never could approach my son, how hard—how dreadful would it be! I should be the most miserable of mortals! I should wander about lamenting through all parts of the heavens, and the lower world. I should sob and call for the child of my heart, never tire calling for him, if even for an eternity O, dear child, do you lead me to my son!" "My arm," replied Lydia, "is too weak, but grace, when it enlightens you, can send you a strong angel from Heaven who will drive away all hindrance, and lead you to the happiness of your son."

Up to this time, the Christian slave shared the sufferings of her mistress, not like a servant, but like a faithful friend. For without knowing it, she was no longer the servant, but the comforter of Metella.

CHAPTER XV.

DIONYSIUS OF CORINTH.

METELLA was too well known in Athens, not to excite the deepest sympathy amongst her friends, at the melancholy tidings from the seat of war. Some of them started for the villa, to express in person the share they took in her afflictions. Amongst these was the venerable philosopher Athenagoras, whose condolence fell on the withered heart of the noble sufferer, like a mild sunbeam. Although Athens, where she had her numerous friends was not far distant, still she did not carry her sorrows there for in misfortune, the heart of man prefers solitude, and finds but few friends to keep it company. Athens was the last place she would wish to visit, as there were preparations making there, to celebrate the conquest over the barbarians, and these would have opened her wounds anew.

Athenagoras promised to introduce her to a man, who was hon-

ored by the faithful of Greece, as a worker of miracles. He lived in Corinth, and therefore was not very far from the Villa.

Metella accepted this intention with gratitude.

The Legends introduce to us two Bishops of Greece, who bore the name of Dionysius. The oldest is the well known Dionysius, the Areopagite, who through the address that St. Paul made A. D. 51, before the Areopagites, was converted to the Faith, and became his disciple. He was the first Bishop of Athens, and died A. D. 117. Centuries later, a church was built to his memory on the Areopagus, but it is now in ruins.

The Dionysius of whom Athenagoras spoke, flourished in the reign of Marcus Aurelius at Corinth, and distinguished himself by his great zeal and brilliant oratory. He was not contented to live solely for his church, but wrote several epistles to distant congregations, the most renowned of which were those to the Lacedemonians and the Athenians. Those to the churches of Nicomedia, Gortyna, Amastris, Gnosus and Rome, letters full of Apostolic zeal, wherein were frequently exposed the errors and heresies of that century, are for the greater part no longer extant. Eusebius has only saved some remnants of them in his Church History. Dionysius encouraged the Athenians in his epistles, to a firmer faith and to an evangelical life; he mentions their former Bishop Publius, who was martyred, and his successor Quadratus, and of the latter he gave testimony, that he had again lighted up the sinking faith of the Athenians. This holy Bishop opposed those heresies which arose in the first and second centuries, and was renowned for inquiring into every particular of each sect that started up, from what writings their founders drew them, and in what they consisted.

Some of his writings were wilfully misrepresented by his opponents, of which he complained: "I wrote some letters," said he, "at the petition of my brothers, but they have been falsified by the messengers of Satan, who found it their interest to make additions and omissions. If they cannot pass unimportant works without injuring them, it may not be much wondered at, if from the same source the text of Holy Scripture becomes hacked and maimed."

With just this view, to fix the Faith and plant Hope in a soul weighed down with grief, the saint found himself urged on to suspend his widely spread activity for some days, and visit Metella. Detached as he was from earth, this visit was to perform no earthly duty. Nothing but an immortal soul found value in his eyes, and little did it trouble him, whether he had to seek it in a palace, or in a wretched hovel. Let us follow the holy man, bent with the burden of age and heavy duties, wending his way slowly towards Theredron.

In his aged countenance shines forth a soul inflamed with the love of God. With a magnetic power, he draws all to Him, and gains the esteem and love of those with whom he converses.

As much as Metella had been accustomed from her earliest years, to mix with those of the highest rank and deepest learning, she had never met one who had made so great an impression upon her, or who had inspired her with so much awe, as this venerable man.

It appeared to her, as if a more than ordinary spirit was concealed within his breast.

She expressed her gratitude that her affliction was shared in so sincerely from the side of the Christians. "My mind," said she to him, "is in the same wrecked condition as my body. It appears to me as if the God of the Christians, whom I saw in a vision, was drawing me up to His glory of streaming light. But scarcely have I raised my thoughts to Him, when I seem to behold the gods of Greece looking angrily at me, and that Jupiter on that account, has allowed this lightning of misfortune to strike me, for having forsaken him, and turned to the God of the Christians.

"I totter like a child, who is just learning to walk, first leaning to one side, and then to the other.

"And yet there can be but one true God—either the God of the Christians or the god of the heathens. For the truth has this peculiarity—that no second truth stands near it.

"Revered master, unloose this knot, and give my mind a rest, after which it has so longed sighed! Give me the true faith."

"It would be a vain thought," said he, "if a Christian were to believe that it is he who gives the Faith. Faith comes from God alone, and is the greatest gift He can bestow on mortals. To some, He gives it in a greater degree, to others in a lesser. Faith is a light that illuminates the spiritual darkness, yet in each, it is but a weak lamp till lighted up in the great Luminary,—Jesus Christ Himself.

"For some, the oil is scarcely sufficient for their own necessities, to pass through the dark labyrinth of life; they can scarcely see a few steps before them on their pilgrimage to the other world, much less to light themselves with it into the glory of Heaven. Should the fuel of this heavenly light fail, and the lamp threaten to extinguish, we must not lose courage, even the Apostles experienced this, as they once expressed it: 'Lord increase our faith!'

"Concerning the question of whether misfortune comes from the God of the Christians, or from the highest god of the heathens. Suppose that Jupiter sends the misfortune—is it not incomprehensible why he does not punish all the Hellenes that do not believe in him, in so much that many of the learned have forsaken the religion of their forefathers? But above all, Jupiter would have to punish the Christians, who intend to annihilate his altars and temple. If your misfortune be sent you by the God of the Christians, it is easily explained." "How! Does your God then who is called the source of all good, send misfortune and affliction to them?" asked the heathen. "God is a vine-dresser," said Dionysius, "who lays the knife to the vine, and cuts off its withered branches, that it may bring forth stronger fruit.

"We feel the wounds he inflicts 'tis true, and they press out most bitter tears, like the drop that falls from the pruned vine. But we must bear in mind, that this Vine-dresser cuts off that only, which is hurtful and unfruitful.

"If you will raise the veil of your conscience, you will discover that the divine love has seen also something in you that must be pruned, to make you truly fruitful."

"What do you mean, revered master?"

"Perhaps it was the love of the world, or the love of riches, or the love of the creature, that held thee enclained, so that the thought of eternity was stupified by that of time. Perhaps, since this trial has happened to you, that you think much oftener on the God of Heaven, on your last end, and on your son, who has found peace by the side of his God."

"O how truly have you spoken! Does then the Divinity send sorrow to lead us to truth and happiness?—That is an act worthy of the highest Being.

"But Plato did not suppose that, when he said that the human mind stands still, when it reflects on wickedness. Am I right, Dionysius, to believe that the Divinity in thus afflicting me, loves me more than ever?"

"Without doubt, Metella—whom God punishes, He also loves."

"O, how willingly would I bear each punishment, were I certain that the Divinity would thereby lead me to the happy plains!

"But do you believe, revered master, that God sees through the immeasurable extent of my anguish? No language on earth is capable of expressing the misery of a mother's sorrow, at the loss of her only child."

Dionysius now drew forth a scroll, upon which he had written some words, with the intention of giving them to the afflicted matron.

They were taken from the Gospel of St. Luke, and were on the touching sympathy our Lord expressed towards an afflicted widow. He read aloud:

"As Jesus came nigh to the gates of the city of Naim, behold a dead man was carried out, the only son of his mother; and she was a widow: and a great multitude of the city was with her. Whom when the Lord had seen, being moved with mercy towards her, he said to her: 'Weep not!' and He came near and

touched the bier. And they that carried it stood still, and He said: 'Young man, I say unto thee arise,' and he that was dead, sat up, and began to speak. And He gave him to his mother."

"That same Lord," said Dionysius, "who felt pity for the afflicted widow of Naim, feels also for thee, and the moment will come, in which He will say to thee: 'Weep not,' and He will restore to thee thy beloved son."

Metella felt herself gaining new strength, as she heard of this wonderful event: and with the saint's explanation. "You give me also the same hope that Athenagoras did; he said that I should yet be united to the blessed in Heaven."

"Certainly, if you fulfil the conditions on which God grants the crown of happiness."

Faith and virtue unite themselves to our Lord, like the two sisters, Martha and Mary, while one sits at His feet, the other is anxiously occupied about Him. Whoever is acquainted with the one sister, will most certainly be introduced to the other. Form a friendship with Christian virtue, and that virtue will soon lead you to faith. 'Will you know if my doctrine is from God?' said Christ, 'so observe it.' It is something beautiful to occupy one's self with study, and to refresh one's self in the treasures of knowledge as in a cooling spring. There is something dignified in reflecting on the things we have read, that we may come nearer and nearer to the truth. But virtue leads you higher than wisdom. Worldly wisdom is a deep sea, many draw from it the pearl of truth, but many, death."

"But what virtues do you recommend to me in particular, in order that I may secure for myself the happiness of Heaven?"

"A holy pope," said he, "sent a letter once to our Church in Corinth, which we still read on Sundays. It commences thus:

'The all-wise Creator of the world knows the multitude and beauty of the Heavenly enjoyments. Let us strive to be found amongst the number of those who wait to partake of His promised gifts. How shall we attain thereto? If we in the faith hold fast on God, if we reflect upon what is pleasing and agreeable to God, that we may accomplish His holy will. Let us walk in the path of truth, and cast aside all injustice, covetousness, discord, wickedness, lust, loquacity, hatred, arrogance, pride, vain-glory, and self-sufficiency.'

Metella listened with profound attention, and on the venerable man rising to depart, she promised him to practice zealously all the virtues he had just dictated.

Report soon circulated amongst her friends and acquaintances, that she was about to adopt a religion which was nothing short of folly. They used their utmost endeavors to dissuade her from such a step. Her ancient nobility, her dazzling wealth, the fame of her learning, the displeasure of the Emperor—all these, they said, should deter her from becoming a Christian.

She was placed in the most agonizing position. Doubts gnawed again upon the freshness of the soul, and it appeared to her as though she must sink under the combat that was passing within.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE CONVERSION.

MONTHS had passed, since the Greek matron had received the melancholy intelligence of her son's death. Harvest and Winter had come and gone, and she was still at her Villa. Pale and reduced to a shadow, she wandered through her costly apartments clad in deep mourning. Nothing could charm her now. She often sat in the court-yard for hours, gazing listlessly on the waters of the fountain, or wandered by moonlight seeking consolation in the soothing and melancholy strains of the nightingale. Dionysius endeavored to raise her depressed spirits by letters but his pious sister Chrysophora, as he called Metella, could not be comforted. What he built up, Metella's friends

would pull down again, and particularly the intellectual Lucian, just returned from Egypt, did not fail to set up Christianity to ridicule. He compared the Christians with the inhabitants of Aldera, who, by listening to a single Grecian declaimer, became so insane, that they spoke ever after in the spirit of Sophocles, and even in the streets, talked only in iambic measure. Such derision had a paralyzing effect on Metella's soul, and she longed for nothing so much as death, and then she knew not whether she should die as a Christian or as a heathen. So far, doubt had brought her to the brink of despair.

The human mind has a natural desire for truth, and as long as it finds it not, it has no rest, and feels only melancholy and a death-like anxiety. The mind of man strives after truth as his heart does after love; but when a doubt is in the case, two elements mingle together, error and truth, which form such a miserable state in the mind, that it can only be compared to the chaotic mixture of earth and water. Metella's corporal strength sunk under such sufferings. She scarcely touched food, and medical aid was resorted to in vain. She wasted away, and was no longer able to leave her apartment without the assistance of her attendants.

"I feel it," said she one day, "that surly Charon is pushing off his bark and waits for me at the sea of Acheron. Do not forget to put the Obolus (penny) under my tongue. The light of my eyes, the flash of which has made hundreds of slaves tremble, will soon be extinguished. Existence here below has no charm for me. Sorrow has one advantage, it frees us from the fear of death."

In this state she had but one wish left—to see Dionysius. He also had an intense desire to see Metella converted before he died, and he was convinced that she would be a pattern for the Christians of Greece; and therefore, he petitioned God to spare her life, for the honor of His Son, and to grant to the much-trying one her health, as well as a believing heart. On his way to Eleusis, he continued his fervent prayer and ascended the steps of Metella's Villa absorbed in meditation. On entering her apartment he found her lying on a sofa apparently at the point of death, and the slaves sobbing round their dying mistress. There was not the grief of hirelings, for she had lately won their tenderest love. Amongst them stood Lydia, a monument of silent resignation.

No one could discover whether Metella was in a swoon or sleep. She lay there like a fallen oak, that once stood proudly on the hill, till the storms came and laid it low.

Dionysius wept as he beheld this fading hope of the Church. Casting himself on his knees, he continued long in prayer, and all the slaves knelt with him. At last he rose as if he had received a command from above. He raised his eyes to Heaven and passed his aged hands noiselessly over the sick bed. The bystanders felt a holy awe, as they saw the trembling hands and uplifted eyes of the saintly man. He then uttered aloud "In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." At these words Metella's eyes opened and a delicate blush suffused her cheeks. She sat up, seized the hand of the Bishop and kissed it. "Oh, I have much to say to you, my venerable friend before I pass away! Faith in the Divinity of Jesus Christ is the broad chasm over which I can find no bridge. Human wisdom has its limits. She can imagine the Divinity, but cannot prove it, because she is human. Oh Dionysius! who will cast this bridge across, if God Himself will not in a wonderful manner let me know Him. Yes, show me the Divine power of miracles of which you have so often spoken, and I will believe—believe as no heart has ever yet believed."

Dionysius replied with a heavenly calm, "God has just given you a proof."

Metella looked round, and could not describe how she felt. All present were trembling, for they saw the wonderful effect of God's power with their own eyes.

She gazed around as if about to ask how she was cured; the saintly man quickly answered her inquiring look. "Not by human, but by Divine aid you have been restored to health." Metella now perceived for the first time, that she had risen as if

* Pope Clement in his letter to the Corinthians, Chap. xxx.

from the grave, and that a new life had diffused itself through her entire frame. She arose and walked without any assistance.

The astonishment of all present was a pledge to her that she did not dream. She confessed that her lost strength had been restored to her in the name of the Redeemer, and she began to praise and glorify Him. This is the signification of a miracle: that it is performed in the name of Jesus Christ, a proof to man that He fulfils His own promises, and that whatsoever is asked of the Eternal Father in His name shall be granted.

"From this moment I believe!" exclaimed Metella; "yes, I believe that Christ is more than man, and I will preserve this belief to the end of my days." Dionysius made the sign of the cross upon her forehead, she knelt down, and that once proud head bent humbly, and petitioned to be numbered amongst the followers of Jesus Christ, and to receive baptism. It was the custom in the Church from the very commencement, that those who wished to receive baptism, were obliged beforehand, as Tertullian says: to prepare themselves by diligent prayer, fasting, nightly watching, and the confessing of their sins.* Dionysius decided that the Neophyte should be formally received into the Church on the coming Easter eve, and ordered her to prepare for the solemn occasion by religious practices. Every day enriched her in works of perfection, clearer and clearer rose the heavenly truth out of the chaos of her former ideas. God created the world and man through love, and through that same love, He sent His only begotten Son for man's redemption. To allow God to love us, and to love Him in return, form the Heavenly bond on earth, which we call Religion. Love is all the issue, means and aim of all things.

A few days before Easter, Metella assembled her entire household of slaves, and presented them with their freedom; that treasure so much prized by man, and after which many of them had sighed for years, but never had hope of obtaining it in this life. Many of Metella's inferiors had already enjoyed these first fruits springing from the soil of a believing mind. Some returned to their longed for homes, and to their families, but the greater number having no homes, offered their services anew for the same wages as before. As soon as Lydia heard of this gracious act, she was not a moment in doubt as to what she would do. She had already been many years in slavery, and had saved as much of her wages as would have purchased her freedom. With this money she now intended to seek after her mother in distant Rome. Then she resolved, that if her money were insufficient, to offer herself as a substitute for her mother, thereby to release her, and secure to her a quiet evening of life.

Metella asked her one day what her views were for the future, and she answered with an embarrassed air: "It will cost me much to leave my present home, but the duty I owe my mother, requires this sacrifice, and therefore I am resolved on journeying to Rome."

Concealing the indescribable agony that this separation was causing her, Metella, although it appeared to her to be the greatest she could offer, was still willing to lay this sacrifice on the altar of her God. Placing her hand on Lydia's shoulder, she said "Do not let us think of anything sorrowful during these days of peace. I never supposed that so many ties of gratitude and friendship could ever bind me to a single mortal.

"What was I before the grace of God brought you into my house? A foolish creature shining like a gilded statue of the gods, and worshipped by many fools. Indeed I resembled that colossal statue in the Temple of Jupiter at Athens. From without, it appears to be composed of nothing but gold and ivory, and before which each one stands in astonishment and awe, but bend yourself and look into the interior, and what do you there behold? Nothing but wooden rafters, nuts, wedges and clumps, pitch and clay, and a quantity of such stuff, not to say anything of the rats and mice that take up their abode in the vacuum. Such was I, my very dear child, in the hidden depths of my soul. If I am otherwise now, the merit is thine." She broke off the discourse, and hastened to her apartment, deeply affected with gratitude and sorrow.

* Tertullian on Baptism Chapter ix.

As she had been for some time ranked amongst the number of the catechumens, she fulfilled the duties, and sometimes visited the place of meeting at Corinth, where the Christians assembled. It is known that in the first centuries, those who sought to be received into the communion of the Church, were divided into three classes: those of the first class were called "Listeners," because they had only permission to be present at the sermon. Those of the second class were called the "Kneelers," as they knelt for a time after the sermon, to receive the prayers and blessing of the Bishop. The third class were called the "Elect." The last mentioned remained in the church till after the Credo, when at the command of the Deacon, "Go, the mass commences," "Ite missa est" they are obliged to leave.

The spring approached, that time of grace in which the Church celebrates the greatest of her festivals. The resurrection of the Son of God coincides with the resuscitation of dead nature, and the conquest of the heavenly Paradise by the second Adam, is yearly announced by joyful verdant May, which animates again the mountain valley, thicket, brake and forest. This rejoicing of nature strikes in each breast the responding chord, but where is it so vividly and melodiously intoned as where it thaws the ice covering of self, and when a new life of grace begins to bloom over benumbed egotism, when the angels unite themselves as guides, and begin to announce to the awakening soul their songs of the heavenly spheres.

These days, previous to receiving the sacrament of Baptism, Metella summoned all her servants to attend.

It was an ancient custom that on the feast of Saturn in December, and on the first day of the month of August, the slaves were served at table by their masters. Since the death of Metellus, this feast had not been celebrated in Theredron. It was now going to be solemnized in a more touching manner. Our Divine Lord, King of Heaven and earth, had a short time before Easter, prepared a feast for His disciples, and showed himself as the servant of all. He washed their feet and waited on them. In commemoration of this, Metella ordered her servants to sit at table, took, according to the custom of a server, a towel, girt herself therewith and waited on them. The feast at an end, she begged pardon of all in general, and each one in particular whom she had offended through her natural hastiness of temper, and she practiced thereby one of the most beautiful virtues; these acts of humility being most painful to nature, are therefore the most meritorious. It is a noble act to acknowledge our faults, and for a noble action, no one is too noble.

We will now accompany our Neophyte to the threshold of the church at Corinth. There she stands like the lowliest among the petitioners, asking to be received into the communion of the Church. The Bishop reminded the supplicants of the persecution that awaited them on earth, and of the triumph that awaited them in Heaven. He then stepped forward, as in former times Baptisms were only administered by the Bishop, and laid his hand on the head of each, as Ananias did once on the blind Saul, and signed each one on the forehead with the sign of Redemption. As the faithful pronounced the words which a noble Neophyte once said to Philip, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." They then abjured the devil, after which they were exorcised and reminded of the words: "Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the Lepers, cast out devils." While repeating the Credo, the Catechumens entered the church, where they were anointed with oil, and they then proceeded to the Baptistry, which in ancient times was very capacious and amply provided with water. Each one was taken separately by a deacon or deaconess and immersed three times: So the expression "Bath of Regeneration" signified in the actual sense of the word, a bath of water. This immersion required fresh garments, and it was then the newly baptised received the white robe, the figure of a spotless soul, and which garment they wore till the eighth day after Easter, which is called, "Dominica in Albis," or the Sunday in white.

Metella was instructed in each particular ceremony, until her regeneration was perfected in water and the Holy Spirit. But the new covenant into which she had just entered, must now be sealed

by that most dignified of all mysteries, the Holy Eucharist. "The body of Christ," said Dionysius, and he placed the Blessed Eucharist in her hand. He then took the golden chalice and held it to her lips with the words: "The chalice, or cup of Life" and Metella deemed herself truly blest to drink of the blood of the Redeemer. This heavenly beverage brought her into a new affinity, the blood of the Messiah flowed in her veins. What delight sparkled in her eyes, and what joy diffused itself over her countenance! Her past sufferings and her agonizing doubts were at an end! How rich did not the Faith render her! What life with its sorrowful events had taken, grace had indemnified in rich measure and flowing over. Death deprived her of a husband, and grace bestowed upon her in the Redeemer a heavenly Bridegroom. Death tore from her a dear son, the only hope of her future life, grace opened to her the prospect of being united with him again.

The prayer of the venerable and saintly Dionysius was heard, and the precious soul was, after great wandering, brought into the one true fold. The joy that beamed on his aged countenance expressed the feelings of his heart. He raised his hands on high and invoked a blessing on Metella, and on the humble Lydia, whose virtuous example urged her to seek after, and find the Way, the Truth and the Life.

CHAPTER XVII.

MARCUS AURELIUS' CONQUEST OF THE MARCOMANNI.

WHILE Metella was enjoying this peace of soul, to which she had till then been a stranger, the troops returned from the distant campaign, and were received amidst the rejoicings of the people. In Rome a magnificent triumphal procession was prepared for the Emperor, and in all the other cities of his vast dominions, the conquest was celebrated with public feasts, processions, sacrifices of thanksgivings and bull-fights. Athens also opened its numerous temples, and offered sacrifice. Public games and festivities continued for several weeks, without intermission. The Athenians even thought of introducing the combats of Gladiators, but old Lucian said to them contemptuously, "Don't resolve on this till at least the altar of commiseration be done away with among you." *

Before we relate anything of this memorable conquest, which the Romans gained over the Germans, and which was much more a conquest of Faith than of arms, let us introduce a few remarks on the character of the Emperor. At an early age Marcus Aurelius distinguished himself by the qualities of his mind and heart. He was but a boy of eight years, when he was received into a particular confraternity of priests, in whose society he received his first religious impressions. He always declared himself to be an advocate for public worship, and on that account he is sometimes compared with the pious Numa Pompilius. Once weeping over the death of one of his teachers, to the astonishment of those present, and of which some of the youths complained, the Emperor Antoninus, his adopted father, beautifully replied, "Allow him to be human, neither philosophy nor imperial dignity ought to deprive him of feeling.

In the second year of Antoninus' reign, he married him to his daughter Faustina, and took him shortly after into the consulship. Marcus was but only 26 years old, when the Emperor bestowed upon him the honor of the Tribuneship, and even the Regency, which though not publicly proclaimed, still was actually so. His affection for the Emperor was so ardent, that he never once left him, during the twenty-five years which elapsed from his adoption to his death. He was forty years old when he began first to wield the Roman Sceptre. He was an Emperor favorable to philosophy, and thought with Plato, that those people were happy whose philosophers were kings or whose kings were philosophers. According to the wish of the new Emperor, the Roman Senate took his adopted brother Lucius Verus as colleague, but he troubled himself more about his eating and drinking, than the happiness of the people.

Aurelius was most intent on preserving the old religion and encouraging learning. If he were in anything blameworthy, it was in his great indulgence to his son Commodus, as also towards his wife Faustina, and the absolute authority which he allowed his officials in the provinces, to exercise. Neither can he be exonerated from cruelty during the war with the Marcomanni, some of his officers with their men stood once before him and informed him, that they had killed three thousand of the enemy, and had taken great booty, but as they had received no commands for this, the Emperor ordered them to be crucified for having broken through military discipline. There arose amongst the soldiers loud clamors of displeasure, but the Emperor sprang into the midst of them unarmed, and cried "Well then put me to death, and add a new crime to the one already committed." He also ordered many thousands in Seleucia to be executed during the Parthian war. His reign was a most unquiet one. The Catti, the Marcomanni, the Scythians, and other people were constant disturbers, and in addition several cities in his dominions were desolated either by earthquakes, plagues, or famine. The heathen priests sought in every possible way to appease the anger of the gods, but without effect, and at last, they threw all the blame upon the Christians, who were consequently delivered up to the public persecutions.

Amongst the wars which Marcus Aurelius had conducted, the one against the Marcomanni and Quadi was the most stubborn. No battle that was ever fought since the foundation of Rome, was so remarkable as that over the Marcomanni. The following is a short account of it, and is taken chiefly from Dio Cassius.

In the year A.D. 174, Marcus Aurelius, with his soldiers found himself in the heart of Germany. The barbarians pressed his army into a deep valley, that was surrounded on all sides by quarries and steep rocks, having completely hemmed them in, they ascended the heights and looked down upon them with savage exultation. The courage of the Romans sunk still deeper, as the dreadful effects of the climate added to their distress. They had already been for five days without water, so that they were almost consumed by a burning thirst. In this extreme distress, the commander-in-chief of the Prætorian Cohort sought the Emperor and said to him: "Cæsar, a portion of our troops the Melitani Legion, consists of Christians, to them nothing is impossible." "Let them pray," said the Emperor, and in an instant the Christian soldiers to a man fell upon their knees. They conjured the true God to let His name be known and glorified in that hour. Their prayer was scarcely ended, when dark clouds collected, the thunder rolled in the distance, and peals re-echoed against the rocky walls of their mountain valley. The lightning, in vivid flashes accompanied by a heavy hail storm struck the rocks where the barbarians were posted. The flashes were so terrific, and followed each other in such rapid succession, that in a few minutes the enemy fell into disorder. But in the valley, a soft rain fell upon the parched Romans, who held out their helmets to receive it, and drank in copious draughts of the refreshment sent them from heaven. Dio Cassius, a heathen writer, has assured us that fire and water descended from Heaven at the same time. Our army, said he, was refreshed, the other was consumed; for the water that fell upon the Romans in refreshing showers, fell upon the barbarians with the fire, like boiling oil. Although inundated, they cried loudly for water, and at every attempt made to extinguish the fire they received great injuries. In their despair they cast themselves into the midst of the Romans, where alone the water was drinkable, and the Emperor exercised the greatest clemency towards them."

In memory of this battle, Marcus was proclaimed Emperor for the seventh time. He issued commands, that the Melitani Legion should be called from that time forward the "Legio Fulminatrix" or "Thundering Legion," and not contented with this, he imparted the wonderful event to the Senate, and published an edict whereby he put a stop to the Persecution of the Christians. The edict, the force of which lasted but a short time, is still extant, and it gives us the title of the then Lord of the world.

Imperator Cæsar, Marcus Aurelius, Antoninus, Augustus Par-

* Lucian, D. N. 57.

thicus, Germanicus, Sarmaticus, Pontifex Maximus, Tribunitie Potestatis.

As a memorial of this remarkable battle, the Roman Senate had a colossal pillar erected, on which the event was depicted in bas-relief. On the top was Jupiter with a long beard and extended arms, bearing the thunderbolt in his hands. A little lower down were the two armies, one in disorder, the other pressing forward sword in hand. The pillar is preserved to the present day, and is one of the greatest ornaments of Rome. It stands on the Piazza Colonna, in the northern part of the city, and consists of 28 blocks of marble, which extend to a height of 135 feet. It was restored in the time of Sixtus V., and a statue of St. Paul substituted for that of Jupiter. Peace being concluded with the people of the Danube, the attention of the Emperor was drawn to the province of Syria, where the General Avidius Cassius usurped the imperial purple. He set out immediately for the East, but Cassius had already been murdered by his soldiers. He pacified the provinces, and hastened back through Greece towards Rome, there to celebrate a glorious triumph. In the midst of such a variety of affairs, and during the most fatiguing journeys he wrote "*Meditations on Self*," in twelve books, which was a rich treasure, containing the moral maxims of life, and which won him the renown of being the most famous of the sages of antiquity. In the first book, he related how he learned to conquer his passions, and particularly anger, from his parents, friends and teachers, and how he labored to attain each virtue. He kept in view, in a most attractive manner, temperance and the reigning virtues of Antoninus Pius, whose adopted son he was. He then offers a rich collection of the most beautiful moral instruction, such as never emanated from the pen of a heathen. Virtue, said he, constitutes the fame, the perfection and the happiness of a nation. Nothing is more dignified than the divinity dwelling within us. As soon as nature has become master of the passions, and knows all that could excite them, she has, according to the words of Socrates, torn herself from that which chains her to sensuality, and charmed, she submits herself to the gods, and has for mankind a tender solicitude. He defines as the original destiny of the soul, knowledge and love of God, to have but one will with God through resignation and a constant practice of virtue. Man must do what is his to do, just as the fig-tree or the bees perform that for which they were destined. A virtuous man never troubles himself about what people say of him, think of him, or do against him, but he is contented when his actions are upright, and accomplishes with love what his vocation requires of him. Free from all excitement he has no other will than the law of God. What a falsehood it is to say, "I will act openly!" What do you mean by that my friend? One must read in your eyes what rests in your soul, just as the lover reads in the eyes of the bride what is passing in her heart. A hypocritical openness or candor is a concealed dagger. One can be a pious man and yet be unknown to all. Never lose sight of this principle, the happiness of life consists in a little. Make use of the short time you have. Yet a little while and the time that is given you to do good, will have passed away. Perform each action as if you were to die at the same moment. It sits badly on a wise man to express a talkative contempt for death.

Through the entire collection of his moral maxims, Marcus Aurelius⁽¹⁾ showed that he was far nearer to Christianity than he himself imagined.

CHAPTER XVIII.

LYDIA'S DEPARTURE.

In the first days of May, a season in which the southern climate pours forth its blessings, the Greeks begin, according to the ancient heathen custom, to prepare for their processions in honor of their gods on all the cross-ways, to petition for a plentiful harvest.

Wherever a statue was to be found, either in the cross-streets or in the fields, there the people assembled in holiday attire, to make their offerings. This feast was called the Compitalia, be-

cause it was held in the cross-ways (in Compitis). Metella and Lydia, who had just returned from Eleusis, were standing at a window, and looking down upon the altars of offerings and on the pagan processions. Before the portico of the house, a servant is seen arranging luggage for a journey; on the opposite side of the olive groves, in the distant harbor, flutter the pennant and flags of a large merchant vessel, which is preparing to set sail in the evening, and is the one destined to carry Lydia to Rome in search of her mother.

"Good child," said Metella, "I was lately at the cemetery of Kerameikos visiting my father's grave, and my thoughts turned on the change and trials of my eventful life. I reflected on the melancholy hours that the future promised me and could have wished to lame the wings of time, to postpone this our separation for a little longer. While thus thinking and wishing my eyes fell upon the trunk of a pine-tree, on the bark of which I perceived something inscribed. On a closer inspection I discovered it to be the initials of my beloved son's name, and from each letter the gum of the tree fell down in golden tears. This made me feel your departure doubly heavy. Every one whom I prize leaves me: father, husband, son and friend, and I hope also to depart soon, and then at last I shall find a resting place. But one thought comforts me, that perhaps a great joy awaits you, when you again meet your mother. O tell her that I was often very unkind to you, that I often grieved you and not seldom treated you badly. But you must not refuse me two requests, they are the most earnest I have ever made. The first is, that you accept the means for your journey. The distance is great, and the time of your sojourn in Rome very uncertain. I have placed amongst your effects a sum of money, sufficient, not only for yourself, but to purchase your mother's freedom, which when you have purchased, then my beloved child—and this is my second petition—return with her to Athens, and you shall spend happy days with me." "I know," continued Metella, "that you have a longing to return to your native land, but for a widow who has much sorrow, Christian friendship will not hesitate to deny itself a satisfaction in the cause of charity."

Lydia took the hands of her mistress reverently within her own, and lifting her eyes to Heaven, sobbed forth: "May God bless you according to the goodness of your noble heart! Nothing but the duty I owe to my beloved mother, could sanction this separation, and nothing but death, dear mistress, shall prevent our return." At this moment Duranus struck the hour, and Metella and Lydia retired to the oratory to pass the last moment together in prayer.

In the Lararium the lamp burned, as in former years, but the protecting house gods had disappeared, and their place was occupied by the true and living God, Jesus Christ, under the species of bread. An emblematic picture concealed the tabernacle, wherein reposed the treasure of the faithful, for it was allowed to the early Christians, to keep in their own homes the Heavenly Manna, particularly in troubled times, and to commune themselves. Metella advanced reverentially towards the tabernacle, opened it, and drew aside the curtain that concealed the Holy of Holies. From the tabernacle shone a silver dove, whose wings were raised as if in flight, and the breast was richly set with sparkling diamonds. Within this, was the Holy Eucharist, and near it was lying a reliquary and chain of gold, the centre of the case was set with one magnificent large pearl. "In this little reliquary," said Metella, "I have enclosed a portion of the Sacred Bread. May our God accompany you on the waves, and protect you from the scoffs of the heathens!" At these words, she placed the chain round Lydia's neck and concealed the case in the bosom of her dress.

Lydia observed the pearl, and drawing forth the reliquary again, kissed it and said to her mistress; "It is a thought full of meaning, that you to the gold which encloses the great pearl of divine love, have added on the exterior, a pearl, as a type of the interior. But dearest mistress, it is the most costly of all your jewels, and perhaps a remembrance from your ancestors, may I return it?"

"Do so," replied Metella, "in Rome, if the price of thy mother's freedom will not be so great as I expect, but thou hast merited infinitely more, as you have led me to that field in which I discovered the great pearl of our holy Faith. I was as a beaten way," continued she sighing, "till your prayers and tears loosened the soil, and placed within its bosom the seeds of faith. I was a cast-off piece of rough marble, in which a noble image slumbered, but which could only be brought to light by a good chisel. Dearest child, thou art that chisel, never to be forgotten. The artist that guided it is the Creator of the world, who formed the body of Eve, and placed it at the head of the creation. Blow after blow fell upon thee, thou patient instrument, and upon me the hard unformed stuff. Still the longer our martyrdom lasts, the nearer we are to its completion. Now the work is finished, therefore the chisel is to be put back to enjoy its well merited rest."

After a most affectionate embrace, and with heart-felt thanks, Lydia tore herself from the arms of her benefactress. She departed from Athens after having passed in it ten eventful years. Metella ascended the pergula to have a last look at the dear traveler. The sun sinking in the west, cast a rich glow on the distant Piræus; a soft evening breeze rose, and gently swelled the sails of the vessel.

Lydia was accompanied to the harbor by several of the domestics, all of whom loved her tenderly; and close to her side, was the faithful Ophne, whose loquacity never ceased, till they reached the harbor, nor would it then, had not the noise and confusion attracted her attention. The sailors were putting all in order, some were hauling in the ropes and unfurling sufficient sail, while one with more authority than the rest, calls those to order who have the care of stowing in the luggage, to keep a sharp look out for goods still left on the landing place. A tight little fellow, although one of the crew, slips from the labor and confusion to a distant part of the ship to hold converse with a friend on the opposite side of the water, which seemed no easy task, as their questions and answers were almost drowned by the noisy waves and the freshening breeze. The hour for departure at length arrives, and the sailors are bustling to and fro, shouting with all their might, to tighten up and clear decks. The farewells were of a varied description. A mother could be seen parting with her only son, and in floods of tears, invoking for him the protection of the gods. Husbands taking leave of their wives and families, to seek in foreign land a support for them, which was denied at home. Men were amongst the number, who by their countenances clearly showed, that loss and gain were the sum total of their existence here. They were alone, for when the heart is absorbed in the goods of this life, it closes itself against the tender ties of family and friends. Wealth is their god, and sacrifice is made to the deity of their sordid minds.

The principal passengers consisted of rich merchants, trading between Greece, Rome and Italy. Jews also, with their merchandize and invalid Greeks, who then, as now, sought the restoration of their health in the balmy climate of Malta. Lydia joined herself to some Christian families who were bound for Rome. The decks being cleared, the trumpet blew the signal for departure, and Lydia waved a last adieu to her friends on shore.

"A happy journey," screamed out little Ophne, "and a quick return;" and she dried up her falling tears, and returned pensively to the palace, regretting the loss of her dear friend. The second signal sounded, and loosed from its moorings, the vessel floated on with swelling sail. They anchored at Delos. This island of the Grecian Archipelago, and so famous in ancient history, is said to have been at one time a floating island. Being the birthplace of Apollo and Diana, it was always held sacred on that account by the pagans, and used as an asylum for all living creatures. In the distance was lovely Syra, rising above the blue waters, like a citadel on a rock. This friendly and well-known island, famous in ancient times for its commerce, has even in our own days become a place of staple commodities. From Delos the ship sailed by the most southern point of the Morea, so called from "Morus," a mulberry tree, which abounds in that

part of Greece, and is appropriated to the support of the silk-worm. They then struck out on the high seas in the direction of the distantly situated Malta.

During the last months, the crowd of circumstances in Lydia's life had so oppressed her, that she was glad to be alone and unobserved, that she might recall to her mind the events that had so quickly followed in succession. She would sit for hours on the deck, apparently watching the foaming waters, but her mind was far distant, and busily occupied taking a retrospective view of the chequered scenes of her own eventful life. How much richer was she now in experience, after having passed through such a school of affliction! At the time she was captive in Smyrna every pulse throbbed for martyrdom. Now experience taught her, that there was a still greater martyrdom than that of the sword or fire; and that to a certain extent, her life as a slave had been nothing but a continued one, which had ended in the conquest of the Faith. How unmistakable did the loving dispensations of Providence present themselves before her mind! She had been appointed as an humble instrument towards the conversion of one of the most illustrious women of Athens. God had prepared this soul to embrace Christianity by the death of her husband and son—trials over which her wealth had no control, but these drew her to the possession of that which neither temporal prosperity nor the gifts of the mind could purchase for her—the one Faith. The human heart has a necessity to communicate with those after death whom it loved in life, and this communication is only possible when the benefit is in the immortality of the soul. This was the first motive that attracted Metella towards conversion. But what Christianity was, and in what manner it was to be practised in order to prepare man for a supernatural life, she learned from her slave. At length God showed her the truth of His revealed Religion, by His holy servants, and confirmed the doctrine of the same by the wonderful interference of His own divine power.

If a voyage be long, and for the greater part monotonous how can a meditative mind fail for a subject, when it beholds in the immeasurable waters of the deep, the beauties of nature in their wildest form. The sea itself gives ample scope for contemplation. Is it not in its calm, as well as in its loud anger, in its immeasurable extent, as well as in its unfathomable depths, a type of the Divinity? And is not the vessel that sails on the bosom of the waves, between the blue firmament and the yawning unknown abyss, a figure of man who wanders through life between the heaven of grace and the depths of depravity?

When the great luminary of the day sinks in the West and leaving to the wide expanse of Heaven his reflective rays, as most as varied in color as the rainbow, does it not give the soul a longing desire to wing its flight above, and bask in the eternal sunshine of its Creator!

What loving soul that has ever gazed on the starry Heavens when on the sea, can say that he was ever more deeply impressed with the majesty of God and his own nothingness, that at such a moment? He is as a mite on the face of the waters, wondering at the immensity of its Creator. It seems as though the soul would burst its earthly bondage, soar on high, and mingle with the starry host. That milky way where the stars roll as in a cloud of vapor, draws our mind along, higher and higher, until it arrives at the palace of the Almighty. It is only a heart full of faith that can appreciate all this. Just as in the darkness of night, a million of worlds appear to man, which by the dazzling light of day are to Him invisible, so, dispensations of the power and wisdom of God disclose themselves to the single eye of the believer, in the hidden darkness of life, a government of which the enlightened mind of the wise ones of the world, has not the slightest conception.

The passengers could as yet see nothing of lovely Malta, save the tops of the sloping hills that were just appearing above the horizon. As they approached nearer, its steep and rugged coast excited no small degree of alarm among the passengers. On those rocks, thought Lydia, the vessel that was conveying the great St. Paul as prisoner to Rome, was shattered by a storm, leaving its crew pensioners on the bounty and hospitality of its

benevolent inhabitants, who first looked upon the great Apostle as a murderer, on seeing a viper cling to his arm, but on beholding him cast the reptile from him, into the fire, without his having received any injury, they looked upon him as a god. While the vessel anchored, to land the passengers destined for the island, Lydia felt a strong desire to place her foot upon a soil hallowed by the presence and miracles of such an illustrious convert; but as she could not gratify this laudable desire, she implored the protection of the Saint for the remainder of the journey to that renowned city, where he was twice imprisoned, and sealed his labors by his martyrdom. As the vessel receded from the shore, Lydia gazed on the watery element that lay before her, and never did the Providence of God appear to her greater than at that moment, when she reflected that a number of human beings were assembled together in a fragile vessel, moving upon the face of the unfathomable waters, with nothing but a few planks between them and eternity. Land had again entirely disappeared, and nothing could be seen but the blue vault of Heaven, closed in on every side of the horizon by the expansive waters. A few birds of passage were the only living creatures to be met with—untiring travelers! they cut through the air and seek but a moment's rest, on either the masts of the vessel or a water-plant. Unworn by these birds does time also fly, and when we think he lingers with us, we find ourselves carried away by him much quicker.

In Syracuse, the passengers received a more exact account of the glorious conquest by the Emperor, and the soldiers returning home to Sicily, lauded Marcus for his extraordinary generosity in bestowing presents on the troops. Between hope and fear, the vessel anchored off the eastern coast of Sicily, where not far distant, rose in gigantic heights the imposing *Ætna*, which sent forth in deep draughts, black clouds of smoke in graceful curls, darkening the blue ether. Pretty little barks, with their dazzling sails, were to be seen in numbers floating by, and stopping at the several places of their destination along the shore. Dolphins bounded over the surface of the waters touching the sides of the vessel in their playful gambols. Higher up, the anchor was dropped at the famous city of Catania, so beautifully situated at the foot of mount *Ætna*, and which to this day, ranks as one of the elegant cities of Europe, though it has frequently suffered from the volcanic eruptions of its majestic neighbor. Having landed the passengers bound for that city, they steered their course to the Straits, this passage so much dreaded by the ancients, but through which they passed in safety, and leaving a cluster of islands to the West, found themselves again on the broad water, making rapid sail for the coast of Italy. They passed by the matchless bay of Naples, with its city partly seated on the declivity of a hill, and its broad shores studded with beautiful villas and lovely gardens, presenting an unrivaled assemblage of the picturesque and beautiful, and bearing a strong contrast to the rugged *Vesuvius* in the background.

Few voyages could present more interesting variety, than the one our travelers had just completed, and yet it was with joy that they saw themselves nearing their destination.

Those for Rome were landed at Ostia, a distance from Rome of fourteen miles, and Lydia for the first time set foot on Italian soil. After having passed a day at Ostia, she proceeded to Rome by land. The nearer she approached its walls, the more intense became her feelings, an alternate hope and fear agitated her breast. With a holy awe she approached that city, which was even then the center of the Christian world. And who would not feel a more than ordinary interest on finding himself in the city of the Cæsars? Rome, as a late writer on this "Eternal City," expresses himself in one of his works, is the mysterious link between two worlds, wherein is represented the history of man under the influence of paganism and of Christianity; and as on earth all rivers flow towards the ocean, so run in the divine, as in the human order, all events of the ancient, as well as of the modern history, out of one city, and this city is Rome. Rome can therefore say of itself, "I am the world!"

CHAPTER XIX.

THE TRIUMPHAL PROCESSION.

WHEN Lydia landed in Italy, she heard that the Emperor, who had already returned from the campaign, had, after a short stay, departed again, accompanied by his wife, *Faustina*, on a visit to the East; but was expected back to Rome in a few days. On his arrival he was to celebrate his conquest over the barbarians. The feast promised to be one of extraordinary magnificence; first, because he had been so little in Rome for the last eight years, and secondly, that on his recent journey to the East, he had suffered a misfortune in the sudden death of his wife *Faustina*, who met her fate at the foot of the *Taurus* mountains. The sympathy of Rome upon the death of this woman, renowned for wickedness, was in the exterior only, for in private they congratulated themselves upon the happy event.

Marcus Aurelius gave himself up to intense grief, and had a temple built in her honor.

The Emperor was waited for by the Consuls and Prætors in Brundisium, one of the most renowned seaports of Calabria.

Thus Rome, "City of the World," expected with impatience and anxiety, from one day to another, the arrival of its Emperor.

A violent storm was the cause of the delay, which, as the historians relate, placed the vessels in the most imminent danger. *Commodus*, the Emperor's son, was at that time sixteen years old, and for his age, remarkably tall and robust. He and his eldest sister *Lucilla*, the young widow of *Verus*, went to meet their father, with a numerous retinue, and congratulated him at Præmeste. In this very place he invested his son with the dignity of the Tribuneship, and commanded that he should stand beside him on the golden chariot during the triumphal procession.

Upon the *Campus Vaticanus* in Rome, where now stands the Pope's Palace, the procession was arranged. All the Senators had assembled there to receive the Emperor. Behind them were numerous animals for sacrifice, white bulls with gilt horns. The spoils of war were dragged along—then came the inscriptions, and figurative representations of the generals and the conquered Germans. Then followed the unhappy captives, who were brought to Rome, when the campaign had terminated. "Have you already heard," was the saying; "that it is actually true, what *Tacitus* relates, that *Helusians* and *Oxioners*, have heads and faces of men, but that the remainder of the body is a wild animal? Come let us see them!"

Bands of musicians were filling up the time with their drums and fifes, and changing alternately with the singers. The *Lictors* then arrived in their purple tunics, and their fasces were entwined with laurels; they took their places immediately behind the captives. A great company of jesters filled up the rear, and immediately before the triumphal chariot, which was unoccupied, stood rows of priests attired in all their festive solemnity, and carrying the insignia of their gods, the vessels for sacrifice and for incense. Masses of people from the city and from the country, forced themselves into all the elevated positions where could be had a clear view. The field of Mars, as well as the Vatican Hills on the other side of the *Portus Triumphalis*, then the hill of *Marius*, the bridges and all the surrounding heights were crowded with spectators. The public places where the procession touched at, and the windows of the houses in those streets through which it passed, were filled with people of all ranks.

The musicians commenced anew, when a hollow sound, that aroused attention, passed through the dense crowd, and shouts reached them from the distance announcing the arrival of the conqueror.

"Io Triumphe! triumphe!" cried out the people.

"*Vita et victoria magno Imperatori.*" Life and victory to the great Emperor!

The triumphal car was drawn by richly caparisoned elephants. *Marcus Aurelius* wore a purple mantle bordered with gold, and a toga embroidered with stars. He held in the left hand an

ivory sceptre headed with the Roman eagle, and in the right, a palm-branch. The crown that encircled his brow was of gold and precious stones, and made so as to represent laurel leaves. Commodus was dressed precisely similar.

A herald went on before, commanding silence, and behind him were boys who sung the song of triumph, and men repeated each time the last words of the strophe. The hymn lauded the bravery, the paternal care, and the immortality of their divine ruler.

The car had not yet reached the triumphal arch, when young Commodus was seen looking several times up at the heights of the newly built Moles Adriani, now called Angel's mount and laughingly drew his father's attention to a sight that presented itself there. It was Brutus Præsa's with his daughter Crispina, who occupied magnificent seats under the imperial tents. The daughter, who was about thirteen years old, uttered a cry of joy as the procession approached, and waved a flag unceasingly, until she drew upon her the eyes of Commodus. But when she saw his face painted with vermillion,* she burst into loud laughter, and ran to conceal herself behind her father. That very Crispina was Rome's future Empress, and was married a short time after to Commodus. How little did she suspect at the time, what her fate would be!†

The more the Emperor and his son enjoyed the scene, the more did the African, who stood behind the Caesars, fulfil his duty. According to the ancient custom, a slave, who held in his hand a golden crown, and who stood behind the car, had to call out frequently during the procession: "Remember that thou art mortal."

As the African crown-bearer repeated these words several times in the ear of Commodus, he pushed him back in his rough manner, with the words: "I am no common mortal."

The procession had turned round the Via Triumphalis, where Adrian's Mausoleum could no longer be seen. But tears so bitter as those that fell from the captives, the soil of Rome had seldom drunk. That the pain and sacrifice of a tedious war, should end for them in such disgrace! The captives walked along carrying on their arms heavy chains, and derided and mocked by the most flighty and contemptible men in the world. Their dark blue eyes shaded with bushy eyebrows, were cast to the earth, and only raised to throw an expression of the deepest hatred on their deriders. Their auburn hair flowed proudly down their muscular backs in natural curls. Their national costume, a simple woollen mantle, or the skin of a beast fastened on the breast with a buckle or strong clasp, increased their Herculean appearance. Young Commodus almost envied them, as he liked so much to be compared with Hercules.‡ Some of the barbarian generals and princes had on a richer costume, and by their mien, and every motion of their body, showed the proud national feeling that pervaded their whole frame. Women and children were also amongst the captives. The women wore the same costume as the men, except that some of them were clothed in white linen, which here and there was colored fancifully with red. Their garments closed tightly round their shoulders, leaving part of their arms uncovered.§

The cries of the children were most touching, and they were clinging closely to their mothers and calling for help, thereby redoubling the pain of their parents. To increase the hatred of their captives, there was a pantomimist, who in the midst of leapers and jesters, ornamented with golden chains and manacles, mimicked the gestures of the barbarians. The grinding of their teeth, the thrusting with their clenched fists, and the whining of their children. He runs first before, and then behind, depending upon the protection of the Lictors. On the bridge crossing the Tiber, one of the scoffers got a blow from an iron

chain in his face with such force, that the blood streamed down, and he had to thank his red mantle for not being himself a subject of laughter. No wonder that the cithern and pipe players who surrounded the pantomimist, moderated their leaping. What was taken from the enemy in helmets, arms and vessels of the temple, in gold and bronze, was of little value. Amongst their arms, the native spear of the conquered excited some attention. It was of small, short, but very sharp iron. The shields were also considered remarkable, because of their form and rare variety of ornaments.

The distinguished Romans, who accompanied the triumphal car, were a cheerful contrast to the despairing gloom of the captives. Immediately behind the nobles, the cohorts of the victorious soldiers followed; the foot and cavalry were crowned with wreaths. They sing songs in praise of their arms, and seize the wine and delicate morsels which were now and then offered them by the nobles. Whatever houses the procession passed, were ornamented with garlands, flowers, and tapestry, on which the initials of the Emperor's name were richly embroidered. The cries "Io triumphe! Vivant Patres Patriæ! Triumph! triumph to the father of the fatherland!" echoed from all sides.*

The pavement of the different streets was thickly strewn with flowers, so that Rome resembled a flower-garden. In addition to this, the air was heavy with perfume, for from every temple the incense rose in clouds, but from the Pantheon of Agrippa, and from the Capitoline Hill it was dense.

The Emperor was so affected at his reception, that he called out to the people several times; "This is the happiest day of my life!" and he kissed the golden Bull that hung upon his neck as a preservative against envy.

At the foot of the Capitol a large statue of Faustina was erected, before which the procession halted, and the Emperor descended from the car of triumph and offered incense. Then he ascended the marble steps of Jupiter Capitolinus; when ascending the Moor presented him with the golden crown and the conqueror laid it at the feet of Jupiter with the words: "The gods have conquered; to Jupiter Pluvius belongs the crown."

The animals that followed in the procession were here offered in sacrifice. At the same moment sacrifices commenced in all the other temples. The procession at an end, the feasting commenced. On this, and on the following days, public festivities of all sorts were celebrated, whereby old and young, high and low, and particularly the common people, gave themselves up to all sorts of gaming, and the most far fetched revelling and gormandizing in the customary way, and which were indigenous to the Roman people. The plays, says an ancient writer, which the Emperor had provided for the people, were magnificent, and at one of them appeared not less than a hundred lions for combat. Notwithstanding his great efforts to make himself pleasing to all, still he opposed them in their desire of gladiatorial combats. He took their swords, and exchanged them for the rapier, and maintained that they could prove their skill equally with them, and that the murders would be less frequent.

The feast was concluded by Marcus making presents to the people. No Emperor in fact, held them in so much consideration as he did. He mentioned in a speech to them his several years' absence from Rome, and some who were listening to him, held up eight fingers and called out, "eight years." The Emperor gave immediate orders for each one present to receive eight pieces of gold of the value of a ducat, in remembrance of those

* The face of the conqueror was painted with vermillion like the statue of Jupiter on feast days. Plin. xxxiii.

† Crispina was later banished to the island of Capri, and there murdered.

‡ When Emperor Commodus called himself the "Roman Hercules," ran about at night dressed in the skin of a Lion, and struck all those he met, with a club.

§ Tacitus Germ. a. m.

* Young Commodus, nearly a year later, as Marcus Aurelius had him titled Augustus and partner in the government, received from the senate, the honorable title of "Father of the Fatherland," a title of which he was as unworthy as the Senate who conferred it. How Commodus, who was sole Emperor at 18 years old treated the Senate, can be seen by the following example: Once he killed a bird in the Amphitheatre, cut off its head and returned to his seat with his bloody sword; then he showed the head of the bird to the Senators, who were sitting near him, and gave them by menaces to understand that he would treat their heads so. Dio Cassius who relates the circumstance, sat under them, and declares they could only suppress their laughter at the comic scene, by stuffing their mouths with the leaves of their laurel wreaths, which they pulled from their hair. The laughter would have cost them their lives.

eight years. The provincial towns, as Dio Cassius remarks, and particularly Smyrna, that had just risen from its ashes, were richly gifted by the Emperor. Through such munificence, the coffers of Marcus Aurelius were so much exhausted, that at last he had no money. He therefore put up his imperial jewels, his plate, and even Faustina's jewels and wardrobe for public sale.

Inasmuch as Marcus Aurelius gained the favor of his people, by his generosity, and as much as he labored to establish his dignity, so much the more was Commodus hated by them: so that all the intentions and labors of the noble father were wrecked on the worthlessness of the son. He was wanton, cruel, unjust, and rapacious, and in every respect bore a striking resemblance to his tyrannical and depraved predecessor, Domitian, and his greatest ambition was to be styled: "The conqueror of a thousand gladiators." Commodus' wicked career was terminated by a sudden and violent death, in the thirty-first year of his age, after a reign of thirteen years.

CHAPTER XX.

LYDIA IN SEARCH OF HER MOTHER.

LUCKAN remarked once in speaking of the Christians; "It is scarcely to be believed, how these men, so indifferent to the duties of the state, can run, the moment the neck of one of their own sect is in danger; they assemble together like ants to save him. They are persuaded that they are immortal in soul and body, and are taught to believe that they are all brothers."

How could it be difficult under such circumstance for one of their faith, entering the imperial city as a stranger, to find a hospitable reception with sympathizing brothers.

Even as it is to this day, where the members of that community settle themselves near the church, so we find that the Christians of that time placed themselves near the sanctuary, and that too on the east side of the city.

The Viminal Hill could perhaps be called the first spot where a colony of Christians settled. "Already in the time of the Apostles there were in Rome, places consecrated to God; by some called oratories, by others churches, where, on every first day of the week, a meeting took place, and the Christians who prayed there, heard the word of God, and received Communion."*

At the foot of the Viminal, stood the church, called the "Church of the Shepherd." In this church, which was afterwards called St. Pudentiana, St. Peter had officiated a hundred years previous, and there celebrated the sacred mysteries. S. S. Peter and Paul, during their sojourn in Rome, converted to Christianity the Senator Pudens and his daughters, and those two daughters, Pudentiana and Praxedes, who clung to the Faith with a holy zeal, appropriated, not only their dwelling places, but the entire of their fortunes to religious purposes.

At this day, eighteen hundred years later, strangers find in Rome, not far from the famous Basilica of S. Maria Maggiore, two churches called St. Pudentiana and St. Praxedes.

Although Lydia was a stranger in Rome, still she found in the above mentioned oratories several Christians, who with the greatest kindness assured her of their services, for they were at that time as in the Apostles; "One heart and one soul." She hastened to impart to her first acquaintance, how her mother had been torn from her several years back, at Smyrna, that she was a Christian, and her name Charitana, and that she was probably a slave in Rome. The number of the Christians was then so great, that it would have been difficult in so large a city, to find a slave, who had in all probability changed her former name. Besides the rich families were, for the most part, in the country during the summer months, seeking change of air either in the mountains or at the sea-side, where they were attended by the greater number of their domestics.

Lydia resolved to remain in Rome, and to seek her mother unceasingly until she had found her, or till she had received certain news of her fate.

She was told that in a few days the feast of St. Magdalen would be celebrated, and that for this purpose, many of the Christians would assemble in the Catacombs near the Appian Way, for divine service, and that she would probably then receive more certain news of Charitana.

At these words Lydia's countenance brightened, and she felt herself the happiest of mortals, and imagined herself already in the embraces of her dear mother, from whom she had been so long separated. This hope did not deter her from making inquiries of all the Christians she met, asking them if they had seen or heard anything of Charitana. She went first of all to a pious and wealthy matron, named Felicitas, to whom she was recommended by Bishop Dionysius, and was received by her as if she had belonged to the renowned family of this much-tried woman. The circumstance that she was the daughter of one sold on account of her Faith, was a sufficient recommendation. Felicitas promised that she would introduce her to the Roman Bishop, Soter, at the next meeting of the faithful, and added that perhaps he could give her some intelligence.

We will now accompany the Christians to the nightly meeting, which on the above named day took place in the Catacombs in the Appian Way. It is two hours past midnight, and Rome is sunk in sleep, but here and there can be seen a straggler who had been tempted to linger with his dissolute companions, far beyond the hour prescribed by usage. Approaching footsteps echoed along the deserted streets, and some females from the house of a wealthy Roman solicitor, Minutius Felix, were wending their way in profound silence along the Esquiline hill, and passed the Coliseum. This gigantic structure, erected by order of Vespasian, is said to have been built in one year, by the forced labor of 12,000 Jews and Christians. It consisted of three orders of architecture, the Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian, and was sixteen hundred and twelve feet in circumference. It contained eighty arcades, and was capable of accommodating a hundred thousand spectators. Their road led to the new and extensive baths built by Antoninus, and then across to the Via Appia towards the Almo river. The females to the left, advanced towards some villas in the valley of Egeria, where were some monuments to the departed Romans, and a temple to the Deus Ridiculus.

The pious company had not yet reached the Catacombs, when Lydia interrupted the long silence of her companions by remarking: "I wonder if I shall see my mother again in this world! Now that I expect to hear something of her, I feel myself oppressed with an unusual heaviness and anxious sorrow. Our wandering here in the first dawn of morning, as well as the tombs here in the Appian Way, yes the memory of the saint herself, whose feast we are going to celebrate—all remind me of the journey of those holy women, who before it was yet day, departed from Jerusalem to visit the sepulchre of our Redeemer. Perhaps our way will also lead to a grave."

"Why such melancholy thoughts," interrupted Felicitas, "remember that Magdalen found Him living, whom she sought in the grave. We are also going to the graves of the saints, who lie in the Catacombs, and perhaps you will find her whom you seek amongst the dead, also living." The nearer she approached the entrance, the more animated became the streets which led to the subterraneous churches. Christians from all parts were assembling at that early hour to join in the solemn service. The women passed through a door to the subterraneous streets and to the last resting places of so many thousands of the faithful departed. A youth was keeping a careful watch at the door, and offered them a taper. The air was thick and oppressive, which the heat of summer did not tend to lessen, and the smell of mouldering bodies was scarcely to be borne. The grey walls of the alternately small and large passages, which crossed each other a hundred times, were full of apertures in the form of open coffins, some of these apertures which were carried up on each side in several tiers were covered with stone slabs, on each of which was an inscription in Latin or Greek. In some places a little earthen vessel was placed before the inscription, a sign that a martyr rested there. There were in several places, sacred emblems under the inscriptions, such as a deer thirsting for water,

* Cf. Proprium Sanctorum in dedicat. Basil SS. Salvatoris.

or a pair of palm branches, or a ship in full sail. On many of the slabs the initials of our Lord's name could be seen.

They had already gone through several of these subterranean passages, when at length the sound of music fell upon their ears. Further on, the space widened, and a subterranean church, lighted up with lamps and wax lights, opened to their view. The length of the church was considerable, and contained two divisions, one for the clergy and men, the other for the females.

At the conclusion of the singing, an aged priest advanced towards the altar, and turning from the people, commenced the divine sacrifice. The arrangements of the prayers were for the most part then, as they are now. After the holy sacrifice, a great number of those present retired to an adjacent hall, to hand to the Bishop charitable gifts, or to consult on the affairs of the faithful. Lydia had looked round in vain to see if her mother were among the number of those present. Felicitas turned to one of the Deacons, and begged his permission to speak to the aged priest who had just celebrated Mass. Her request was granted, and she informed him that a Christian from Smyrna had arrived in search of her mother, who was also a Christian, and named Charitana, and after whom she had up to the present, made fruitless inquiries. At this, joy and pain were alike depicted on the priest's countenance, for he doubted not being able to give the information she required. The young stranger stood motionless before him. Her eye anxiously fixed upon every movement of his lips. She expected that the thousand conjectures which had so often harassed her mind were now about to be confirmed. "O thou happy child!" said the old man, "happy in having been in the school of St. Polycarp, and threefold happy, because thou art the daughter of a Saint!"

His voice began to falter which Felicitas perceiving, understood at once what was to follow, and turned aside to conceal her emotion. Lydia did not understand the meaning of his words, her heart beat violently as the old man rose and motioned to them to follow him. They went through long passages that crossed each other at intervals, till they came to one somewhat wider; here the priest stood still. He brushed away a tear, and motioned to Lydia to approach. With deep emotion he drew her attention to a square stone, upon which the light of the torch fell, and helped her to perceive though indistinctly, the name of her beloved mother.

"Charitana the martyr lies here, as a Saint among the Saints. She died on the Ides of April. Rejoice in the Lord and pray for us!"

Lydia read the inscription and turned with a look full of vague sorrow towards Felicitas. Her eyes betrayed a doubt as to whether she was not mistaken; and looking at her friend, she suddenly uttered a loud scream that echoed through the vaults, and cast herself convulsively into the arms of Felicitas where she remained motionless for some minutes. At last she began to realize her position. She was standing at the grave of her mother, Charitana; in that very hour in which she had hoped to find her living, she had found her tomb. A phial of the martyr's blood stood near the slab. What hast thou not to suffer much tried daughter, before thy body sinks beneath the burden of thy trials! Thou camest from Athens to Rome to seek thy long lost mother, and thou hast found nothing but her tomb. O! that thou also couldst rest here in peace! Faith and affection struggled within her, affection grieved at not having her beloved mother on earth, but Faith rejoiced at her triumph. The latter conquered and the daughter sank upon her knees and pressed her hands on the stone that covered the remains of all she held most dear. Many and strong were the feelings that agitated her heart—sorrow and pity struggled for mastery, but the joy that the departed one had gained the crown of Martyrdom, silenced every emotion. At that time, as well as now, a lively faith penetrated the hearts of the believers, and the separation between the living and the dead did not appear so dreadful. Fervent Christians considered a good death as the greatest gift from God, and what can any one wish for those he loves, more than the possession of the highest of all gifts, God Himself!

Therefore, great as Lydia's joy would have been, had she found her mother amongst the living, still she was no less delighted that she had suffered death for the Faith, by which she had secured the immediate possession of God. Charitana as we have already related, was shipped for Rome on the night of the earthquake of Smyrna, and was there purchased by a former Prefect. As long as the persecution was quiet, Crescentius would not betray that she was a Christian.

The philosopher Justin wrote a letter of defence about this time, and addressed it to Marcus Aurelius and the Senate. Soon after he was cast into prison, together with several other Christians. Crescentius, in order to ingratiate himself with the Proconsul Rusticus, sent his slave Charitana to him, telling him that he might do with her what he liked. The Proconsul ordered Charitana, whose strength was already greatly impaired by anxiety, to be sent to the same prison with the other Christians. When Justin with six of his companions in the Faith was brought before the Judge, he commenced speaking, and declared openly and frankly that they would preserve their Faith to their last breath. To offer sacrifice to the gods as the Emperor had commanded, Justin held to be in opposition to the commands of the Redeemer. Rusticus questioned him as to what sort of learning occupied him. Justin gave the answer that is to be found in the acts of martyrdom, "I exerted myself to attain knowledge of all sorts but as I could not therein find the truth, I at last devoted myself to Christian philosophy, although it displeases those who allow themselves to be blinded by errors and prejudice. I glory in it, because it has afforded me the advantage of walking in the way of truth."

When asked by the Prefect about the place where the Christians usually assembled, he answered: "They assemble when and where they can. Our God is not bound to any certain place, as He is invisible, and fills Heaven and earth, He is praised and worshipped in all places."

The Judge put similar questions to the others who were imprisoned with Justin, and they all answered that they were Christians by the mercy of God. "Are you convinced," said the Proconsul, turning to Justin, "that you will ascend to Heaven if you be scourged from head to foot?" Justin answered in the affirmative. "Our sufferings will hasten our happiness, and carry us to that judgment-seat before which all will have to appear." The others added: "It is useless to keep us longer waiting. We are Christians and will never sacrifice to the gods."

As the Prefect saw that they persevered undauntedly in their refusal, he condemned them to be first scourged, and then, according to the Roman method, he commanded them once more to sacrifice to the gods: but they all refused. The martyrs were then led to the place of execution where they received their glorious crowns.

Justin had already fallen, and five of his companions had shared his fate, leaving Charitana alone standing in the blood of her companions. She bent her head to the earth, in all humility, crossed her arms upon her breast and remained in prayer. As she returned no answer to the many questions put to her by the judge, Rusticus gave a sign to the executioner, and immediately his rough hand seized her fainting form by the shoulder, cast her to the ground, and in a moment her head lay severed from her body.

The legends have preserved to us the names of these six martyrs who suffered with Justin, and they are: Charitana, Euclipistus, Hierax, Pæon, Liberianus, and Chariton. The year of this event is given as A. D. 167—18th of April. Justin is honored by the Greeks on the 1st of June.

After this short digression let us return again to the grave of Charitana. He who led her daughter to it, is already departed to join the meeting which was usual after the sacrifice. He is no other than the kind and pious Pope, Soter, who is like the Good Shepherd in the midst of his threatened sheep, and whose bare appearance is a loud exhortation to all to stand firm. Church history praised this holy Pope in a particular manner, on account of his mildness and fatherly tenderness. Not only to the members of the Church in Rome did the pope extend

his care, but also to each one individually, no matter whence he came. That same Dionysius whom we before mentioned, sent his thanks to the faithful in Rome for the donations they had forwarded to him at Corinth. "From the beginning of Christianity," he wrote to them, "you were accustomed to assist the faithful in every possible way, and to supply the wants of many churches. You have also provided for the support of the poor brethren in the mines, and thereby proved yourselves true imitators of our great Master. Your Bishop, the highly venerated Soter, far from preventing this praiseworthy custom, has himself on the contrary, given it a fresh impetus, and he is not only careful to distribute alms collected for the support of the Christians, but he comforts with the tenderness of a father, all the faithful who go to Rome."

How consoling it was for Lydia to witness the truth confirmed of all she had heard in Greece of Soter's goodness. There was not one in the whole assembly for whom this holy man had not a word of encouragement and edification. None amongst them is truly in need, because all are rich in love. It was one and the same faith which called the Christians of the only true Church to such meetings, and if they were threatened with worldly power, so one and the same hope made each danger small, nay insignificant. But that the calumnies which were to be met with everywhere in the heathen writings were without foundation, we can see already from the letter which Pliny the younger, addressed to the Emperor Trajan, in which amongst other things he says:

"The Christians assure us, that their entire guilt consists in this, that on certain days before the rising of the sun, they assemble to sing a hymn in honor of Christ, the Son of God. Therefore they would not have solemnly bound themselves to treason, but on the contrary refrain from theft and adultery, and the denial of that which is entrusted to them." The faithful withdrew separately to return to the city. The Pope still remained in the meeting-hall to arrange the collections. Lydia advanced to the holy father, cast herself at his feet, and thanked him for what he had done for her mother. At the same time she had learned that as Soter had been a friend of St. Polycarp and in consideration of Charitana having been his spiritual daughter, he gave orders himself for her burial and tomb. The kind Pope exhorted Lydia to imitate the virtues of her mother, and to persevere with firmness to the end, in imitating her Divine Master. She then visited the tombs of Anicetus and of several other Popes, and returned with her companions through the entrance of the Catacombs to the Via Appia.

CHAPTER XXI.

SOLITUDE AND HOLY PLACES.

LYDIA, after the events of the last few days, sought retirement in a little room appropriated for her use in the house of the pious Felicitas, there to recover her strength in silence, and to impart the results of her visit to Rome, to her much valued and now only friend on earth, Metella. She felt it her duty to give a detailed account of everything she saw and heard to her dear mistress. After God, it was the only solace left her, to communicate her inmost thoughts to one whom she so tenderly loved.

Rome was at this time peopled by nearly a million of inhabitants, and although its magnificent palaces and temples, its public baths and pleasure grounds could not be surpassed, still Lydia preferred to renounce the immediate seeing of those great sights, that she might reflect upon the wonderful ways of God, particularly as they had been revealed to her within the last few days. She was accustomed at all times, as often as a remarkable event occurred, that broke through the monotony of her hidden life, to retire into herself, and seek to discover the cause, by a close union with God. The sweet remembrances of her joyful childhood passed like phantoms before her eyes. She thought of the time, when as a cheerful happy child, she sat on her mother's knee,

and listened to her pious instructions, and the raptures with which she spoke of the happiness that is prepared in Heaven, for those who serve God faithfully on earth. Then the remembrance of the sorrowful hours she spent at the bedside of a dying father, whose pious exhortations sank deeply into her youthful mind. Then how she sat at the feet of those holy men, filled with the Divine Spirit, to be instructed by them in the faith, and who afterwards shed their blood in its defence.

But she became doubly afflicted when her thoughts turned upon the last meeting she had with her mother. But this was now at an end, and her heart beat with emotion as she looked heavenward, and represented to herself the glorious triumphs of the saints; and she knew that in the number of the elect, she had an advocate that would never forget her. If a breath of temptation passed over her pure heart, the bare thought of this, her advocate, was a strong shield against all the suggestions of the evil one. So should all Christian mothers become the guardian spirit of their children here on earth, and if the heart of a well-trained child find itself inclined to commit sin, the remembrance of a mother's pious admonitions will never fail to warn it against the seductions of the common enemy.

The beloved parent of Lydia had given her, during life, a perfect model of what a Christian ought to be, and confirmed it by her holy death. God did not accept the sacrifice of Lydia's freedom, which she had come from Greece to offer, but the merit was no less, for God accepts the will, and in that the sacrifice was included. Therefore the pious daughter could from that time forward perfectly enjoy her freedom, the greatest amongst all the temporal blessings, and that which is the most difficult to resign.

No Christian would leave Rome without visiting the tombs of the saints. "In my youth," said Hieronymus, "when I studied in Rome, I used to spend my Sundays at the tombs of the Apostles and Martyrs. How often have I visited the crypts where their sacred remains lay side by side, and surrounded by a darkness that impressed the visitor with a holy awe!"

The tombs of S. S. Peter and Paul first claimed Lydia's attention. According to Pope Gregory, the two Apostles were first buried in the Catacombs, two miles distant from the city. Soon afterwards, the body of St. Peter was brought to the Vatican hill, and that of St. Paul to the Ostian way. After Lydia had visited the tombs of the Apostles, before which so many thousand Christians had their faith strengthened, she then desired to see the spot where her mother's blood had been shed. Felicitas who accompanied her on the way, showed her the temple of Jupiter on the Capitoline Hill, under which were the dark prisons, where so many Christians, Lydia's mother amongst the number, had suffered imprisonment. These vaults were hewn out of the Capitoline Hill, and to the deepest there was not even a passage, and the condemned had to be slipped into the vault on planks; this can be seen at the present day. In one of these subterranean prisons was also St. Peter, and wherein he baptized a jailer with water from a spring, which he in a wonderful manner, like a second Moses, brought forth from the rock. What a multitude of thoughts did not the sight of the Roman Capitol occasion! Above was the temple of Jupiter, surrounded by a multiplicity of little shrines, dedicated to the numerous idols—beneath, as it was then thought, was the tomb for Christianity—above, the signs of unlimited self-love, which as St. Augustine says, reaches to self-deification; beneath, the signs of the love of God, which humbles and annihilates self. At a short distance is the Forum. Who then can describe the glorious combats that were here fought, and who could name the thousands that heard their sentence here?

On reaching the Forum, Lydia knelt down and kissed the marble flags which covered this memorable place, for from that spot her mother's soul had ascended to Heaven. Felicitas advanced a little, and showed her where the Prefect's seat was at that time, where Justin had stood, and where her mother had shed her blood. "When Rusticus saw," continued Felicitas, "that Charitana would not sacrifice to the gods, he ordered her to be scourged; a punishment, my child, that a greater than we had to bear, long

before us. She then placed herself close to her companions, and prayed unceasingly with bowed head. She was so lost in prayer that she never moved her position, when the head of Justin was held up to the applauding multitude. At last when her turn came, she stepped forward, and answered the two questions: 'For whom do you die? and, does death appear so agreeable?' Her answer was: 'For my Faith in Christ, who is my Redeemer and my All. It is sweet to suffer for a friend, but to die for God is heavenly delight.'" Lydia with tears in her eyes, looked at one time on the earth, at another towards Heaven. How willingly would she not have resigned her life at that moment, to be happy with her mother. Occupied with these thoughts she left the Forum, and Felicitas led her to the great amphitheatre of Nero, which from the adjacent high Colossus was called the Coliseum. How many hundred Christians, true to the faith have stood on this Arena, how many lions and leopards have here lapped up the blood of the martyrs, and how did the applause of ninety thousand spectators thunder forth, when such amusements were granted to pagan Rome! There were still two other tombs in which Lydia felt the deepest interest, although in latter centuries the veil of oblivion has passed over them.

About twenty years before Lydia's birth, there lived in a Province of Umbria, a noble and richly endowed widow, named Sabina. This pagan matron had a Syrian slave, who with a rare zeal clung to the doctrines of the Gospel. She never ceased, so says the legend, praising the beauty of Christianity to her mistress; and as she exemplified it in her own pure and chaste life, she overcame the prejudice which her mistress had for many years entertained against the Christians. Sabina became a Christian, and by the brilliancy of her virtues, was one of the brightest ornaments of the Church in the second century.

The Emperor Adrian published an edict for a persecution of the Christians, and in consequence of this, the Governor of the province of Umbria imprisoned Sabina and her slave, Seraphica; and as the latter was the cause of Sabina's conversion, he had her beaten with rods till her tender body sunk under the cruelty, and she was finally beheaded. Seraphica's mistress, who was released from prison in consideration of her high rank, procured the body of her martyred slave, and gave it honorable interment. After this, she led a more retired life than ever, and night and day, besought her departed friend to obtain for her the grace of martyrdom. Her prayer was heard, for in the following year she was summoned by Elpidius, the new Governor of Umbria to appear before him, and he having shamefully maltreated her, ordered her to prison; when she arrived there, she found herself filled with a holy joy: "And is it then possible" she exclaimed, "that I am to be admitted to a participation of the glory enjoyed by my Seraphica? She has obtained for me this great privilege." She was again summoned the following day, but Elpidius finding all his entreaties vain, condemned her to be beheaded. She suffered on the very day upon which, in the preceding year, her companions gained the crown.* Although this Syrian slave bore a great resemblance to Lydia in her glowing love for Christ, and by the conversion of her mistress, still she had another tie upon her affection; having been baptized after that saint, whose name, it will be remembered, she bore till she became a slave in Athens.

Lydia was seldom so oppressed with sorrow as now, standing before the tomb of this much-tried virgin, who bore the miseries of slavery to her last breath. She cast a look upon her own interior, and read therein what her patron must have suffered, and also the joy she must have experienced when she saw her mistress one of the "True Fold." With what ardor did not she thank St. Seraphica, for the protection she had afforded her through her past life, and recommended not only herself, but also her newly converted mistress to the powerful protection of both martyrs.

Before the tombs of these holy women she took a vow of perpetual chastity, and resolved as a handmaid of the Lord, to devote herself to His service.

CHAPTER XXII.

IRENÆUS.

LYDIA was now occupied in making preparations for her return to Athens, as she was receiving letter after letter from Metella, entreating her to delay her departure no longer; and urged by this last request, she sallied forth at once, to make inquiries on what day the next ship would sail for Greece. On her way, she was surprised to meet one whose features were familiar to her, and on a moment's reflection, she recognized no other than the priest Irenæus, whom she last saw on the ruins of Smyrna.

For many years he had preached the Faith in the South of France, by the side of the aged Pothinus, bishop of Lyons, who like him, had been a disciple of St. Polycarp. Immediately after the persecution had commenced in Smyrna, a number of Christians from Asia Minor, wandered to the south of Gaul, and Irenæus was one of the number. Trade and traffic had made their way between these two distant lands, where as the seed of Christianity began to shoot, a tempest of persecution threatened to destroy it forever.

Notwithstanding the Emperor's decree, A. D. 177, in favor of the Christians, the Roman Governor and the people of Lyons and Vienne, still raged against them with dreadful cruelty. Roman justice, as Church history informs us, was, in the first three centuries very vacillating, and the immense extent of the Empire, easily explains how the Emperor's decree was carried out in distant provinces, with greater or less exactness, according to the dispositions of whatever Governor was in authority. The position of a Governor depended more or less on the favor of the people, who it is well-known, had a downright passion for sanguinary combats, and that their cry became: "Panem et Circenses." "Bread and the Circus." During war, Rome stained its sword in the blood of its enemies, during peace, in that of its own citizens. These were the gladiatorial combats and the persecutions of the Christians.

We need not doubt that some Christians were to be found earlier in Gaul, still it is worthy of credit, that no Christian blood was shed on the soil of France, before the reign of Marcus Aurelius.

The lights of the new faith were Pothinus and Irenæus. These two great missionaries of Gaul carried the Faith thither from Asia Minor, where they received it from St. Polycarp and because Polycarp had been a disciple of St. John, it might with truth be said, that they received it from the Apostles themselves. The labors of St. Pothinus were carried on, almost in silence, and he was already a venerable man of ninety years, when the persecution commenced. Except in the Church records in Smyrna, wherein there is an account of the death of St. Polycarp and his companions, we have not so remarkable a memento of Christian antiquity, as the famous account which the churches of Lyons and Vienne have left us, upon the persecution of the Church in Asia Minor. It is thought that Irenæus was the writer of those epistles, and that in the same year in which the persecution took place 177, he was sent to Rome to impart to the Pope the minutie of the sanguinary proceedings. Soter was already dead, and in his place Eleutherius had undertaken the guidance of the Church.

It was the custom of the first centuries to read the acts of the martyrs in all Christian assemblies, for the edification of the faithful, and what Irenæus had witnessed with his own eyes, he wished on his arrival in Rome to deliver verbally to the faithful.

The day on which he was to hold the funeral oration on the death of forty-eight holy martyrs, was announced in the assemblies, and the church of St. Praxedes, that asylum and oratory of the early Christians, beneath which the bodies of 300 mar-

* Not far from the Sulpice bridge, there was a beautiful church built to St. Sabina some hundred years later, and near which the Dominican monastery now stands, commanding a lovely view of the magnificent city. The erection of the church is dated as far back as A. D. 490.

tyrs lay buried, was chosen for this purpose. Lydia was also there, and she took with her the precious girdle of St. Polycarp, to become the possessor of which had cost her eleven years of slavery. With anxious heart, she passed the Theatre of Flora, ignorant of the shocking scenes that took place there, scenes that often brought the blush to the most shameless countenances, and she stands already at the entrance of the house of God.

How altered was Irenæus! Care and labor, not years, had furrowed his countenance, and had given him the appearance of an aged man.

"It would be in vain to describe," commenced Irenæus, "the trouble that fell upon us in those latter days: The Christians in Lyons were formally proscribed. They were hunted forth from their dwellings, and the blue heavens given to them as a shelter. They were not allowed to appear in public places without being put to shame, not even the refreshing comfort of a bath was granted to them. If any of the people ill-used one of us in blind fury, the officers of justice had no ear for his troubles, on the contrary, it was the officials themselves who led the Christians to the public places, and there asked them what their faith was, and then without anything further, had them cast into prison. On account of this treatment, one of the senators, urged by a holy zeal, petitioned one day to speak in the hall of justice, in defence of the Christians. He did it with that vivacity which his feeling of justice and his youth dictated, and stood as witness that the Christians were not guilty of the vices ascribed to them. But the people interrupted the speaker with vehement groans, and the Proconsul, who also sat in the Hall, asked the defender if he himself were a Christian. Vettius, so he was called, answered in the affirmative;—he was immediately seized, on a sign from the Proconsul, and sent to join the Christians already in prison. On this the public judicial persecution commenced. The following days the Proconsul ordered all the prisoners to be led bound before him. He addressed them in the most violent language, upon the horrible crimes they had committed, and threatened them with the most dreadful tortures if they did not abjure Christianity. When the executioner placed before their eyes the favorite instruments of torment, and explained the use of them, some of the Christians began to tremble and grow pale. The Proconsul profiting by their agitation, ordered incense to be placed in their hands, and alas! many of them sacrificed to the gods. The apostates were ten. This act filled us with unspeakable grief. We suffered a further humiliation through some slaves, who, with their Christian owners, had entered the Church, although as yet they were not thoroughly instructed in the doctrines. Frightened by the threatened punishments, they not only related what they saw in the Christian assemblies, but several of them hoped to gain their freedom by becoming false witnesses. They were therefore, not ashamed to maintain before the people, that they saw with their own eyes, how we, like Thyeestes eat the flesh of children, and practised vices that my lips would refuse to utter. At this speech, some of the people applauded, others were indignant and also those turned against us, who, up to that time had some faith in our holy doctrine. The torture was next applied to many of the prisoners in the most cruel manner, and not alone the torture but also red hot irons, were pressed down upon the sufferers in great brutality, until the bodies were no longer to be recognized. Others were put into the stocks, and their feet stretched till the sinews tore asunder.

"So passed a portion of the month of May. But more sorrowfully did it terminate. I must now speak of the death of an old man, who amply fulfilled the hopes of his great master, Polycarp, and as in life, so in death he trod in his holy footsteps. Although the last events greatly affected him, still a youthful vigor seemed to take possession of his aged limbs; this was but lent to him, that he might leave behind him a remarkable example. The city authorities sent armed soldiers for this old man, and had him brought through the public streets from his dwelling. An immense concourse of people, children, and the aged, followed with ferocious cries, amidst curses and opprobrious lan-

guage. When the Proconsul asked who was the God of the Christians—he answered.

'You will know God when you are worthy of it.'

"The pagans no sooner heard this reply, than they set upon the aged Bishop like wild beasts, and so inhumanly treated him that he sunk to the ground. The Governor then saw that the people were embittered, and that they were even arrogating to themselves the office of judge, he therefore ordered Pothinus to be carried back to prison. There we saw him for the last time. He signed us with the sign of martyrdom, by pressing his bleeding lips to our foreheads. Two days later the Church of Lyons had to mourn her Bishop and one of her principal pillars." At these words, the speaker thought of the loss he had himself sustained by the death of his beloved and venerated friend. All present participated in his grief, and loud sobbing was heard in the assembly.

"Amongst the prisoners," continued he, "were some Roman citizens, who claim protection from public contempt by privilege. The Proconsul sent the information to Rome and begged a command to retain as well the citizens as the other prisoners. When we were informed of this, our hopes were raised, for we trusted that it was still fresh in the Emperor's mind in what situation his whole army had lately found themselves, and how the prayers of the Christian Legion drew down the refreshing rain from Heaven which saved them from a parching death. How bitterly did the Emperor's commands deceive us! Marcus Aurelius decided on the death of each one that persevered in the confession of Christ. The Proconsul resolved that at the next public sports, at which a great multitude was expected to assemble, the prisoners should be brought forth, and that the Roman citizens were to be beheaded, but that the others should be reserved for the wild beasts.

"As we saw at this investigation those also appear who had already declared that they would offer sacrifice to the gods, our hearts beat in anxious expectation. Quite close to the judge's seat we observed a doctor of Lyons, Alexander of Phrygia, who was most beloved by the people. His presence there astonished and perplexed us, for he was known to be a man of apostolic spirit. While the apostates were questioned anew, if they abided by their former declaration, some of them unhesitatingly acknowledged, that they had been guilty of great injustice by their apostasy, and were now firmly resolved to offer up their lives for the Faith.

"Alexander, who stood opposite to them, bowed his head in a friendly manner, and showed by the motion of his whole body, how ardently he wished them to remain firm in their good resolutions. This was a great comfort to us, and but few, who were never very much in earnest, remained apostates. So this admirable Alexander saved many from destruction, not thinking of the danger in which he was placing himself. The people had observed him, and were roused almost to madness, and the Governor putting the question to him if he were a Christian, Alexander answered in the affirmative, and immediately his sentence was pronounced. He who loses his life in this manner is sure to find it.

"On the following day all met at the sports in the amphitheatre; alas! it was a sport as in Nero's time. Two from Asia Minor were to be led to death, Alexander and Attalus from Pergamus, who was formerly so vehemently persecuted. As he was placed on a red hot iron stool because he was accused of being a cannibal, he turned to the spectators and said to them in the Latin language: 'Behold this is what you may call consuming men, you are guilty of this inhumanity, but we are no cannibals.' Alexander next suffered. But now, dearest brethren, for an edifying example of two young persons, one was a very youthful and beautiful girl, named Blandina, she was a slave, and of so delicate a constitution, that she caused in us the greatest anxiety, and yet this remarkable servant of God, had from the earliest dawn till late in the evening, defied her tormentors, who relieved each other at intervals, and when the savages sent her back to her prison, she spent her whole time in attending and

consoling her companions to the entire forgetfulness of herself. Her death had been previously decided on, but a remarkable circumstance prevented its taking place. She had been even tied to the stake in the middle of the Arena, to be attacked by wild beasts. She stood there with outstretched arms, a true follower of her crucified Lord. At one moment she raised her eyes to Heaven, at another she fixed them on the panther, just liberated from its cage. The beast was less of the savage than the jailer who liberated him, for the moment he beheld the maiden, his ferocious nature gave way, he turned suddenly from her, and crouchingly retreated to his cave. This failing, she was then led, together with Ponticus, a youth of fifteen years of age, to the different altars and they were desired to offer incense. But still Blandina thought not of her own sufferings, she pressed her chains piously to her bosom, and whispered to her youthful companion smilingly, words of comfort. The youth suffered with a cheerful mien all sorts of torments, and terminated his young life by a heroic death. Now Blandina stood alone, that she was stronger than all the instruments of torture, excited the people to the greatest fury, but the last hour struck for her also. She was scourged, next torn with iron hooks, till her entrails appeared, she was then tied in a net, and dragged about by a wild bull, and at last was put sitting on a red hot stool. Finding she still breathed, her sufferings were terminated by the sword; and it was acknowledged by the pagans themselves, that no woman had ever been known to endure such torments with so much constancy.

"Forty-eight martyrs thus sacrificed their lives. Their bodies were thrown to the dogs, their bones burnt, and their ashes cast into the Rhone." "Let us see," said the heathens, "whether their God will resuscitate them again." "And if we were able," concluded Irenæus, "to cast a look above the blue vault of Heaven that separates us from our happy brethren, we should behold on the head of each, a sparkling crown: For as often as a persecution breaks out, the portals of Heaven open, and the crowns of glory descend on the bleeding temples of the well-tried combatants."

When the holy man had ceased speaking, all those present cast themselves on their knees, beseeching the assistance of the martyrs, to obtain strength, if God so willed them to suffer a similar death, but they were not called upon to suffer, as the persecution ceased for a time.

This sermon made an indelible impression on all present, and one after the other left the church in deep thought. Lydia waited for the moment that Irenæus would cross the threshold of the sanctuary. Many years had passed since he saw her bound with the girdle of his martyred master at Smyrna. This precious relic she carried about her, and suspecting that Irenæus would have a death similar to that of St. Polycarp, she resolved to renounce all claim to the relic and present it to him, who by his talents and virtue filled so high a position.

Irenæus gazed at her inquiringly; for a moment he appeared as if he had to recall by-gone days, to bring back her features to his mind. Suddenly he exclaimed: "this is a child of St. Polycarp, one whom I last saw on the ruins of Smyrna," Lydia was silent. Felicitas who stood near her, spoke for her, and related in a few words, her sorrows and the cause of her journey to Rome. Lydia taking courage addressed him; "Revered disciple of our great Bishop! dare I venture to offer you a remembrance of Smyrna? Behold the girdle which St. Polycarp took off before he ascended the pile! The first amongst his followers should possess it, and when the last hour shall strike for him, may the protecting spirit of the patron saint of my native city, hover round him!"

Irenæus accepted the gift, and pressed it silently to his lips. Thanking Lydia for the precious and unexpected present, he bestowed upon her and Felicitas his blessing, with a fervent hope, that after the trials of this life, he would meet them in the world to come, where separation is no more.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE INVALID.

What sadness filled the house of Felicitas! The dearly loved emancipated one prepares to return to Athens. Her hostess had firmly attached herself to her guest, because she had shared with her in this life, the same dangers, and had for the future, the same hopes. The last good wishes were exchanged, and Lydia placed the casket before her which contained the great pearl; for, according to the pious custom of those days, she commenced her journey accompanied by her God. Hark! there is suddenly a loud knocking at the gate, and Lydia distinctly hears a man's voice. He is asking in an excited tone, if the young Athenian is to be found here, or if she is already on her way to Greece.

"Well, God be praised!" said the stranger, and entered the apartment, "God greet you," said he to Lydia, "Where is the emancipated slave who served the rich Metella? I have something to impart to her."

The rough manner in which the stranger approached her, and on the other hand, the look of astonishment that his features expressed, quite confused her. Still it appeared to Lydia, as though she had seen the wounded man lately in one of the assemblies. "Are you" continued he, "the enfranchised of an Athenian lady, who had a son named Lucius, a blooming son, who died fighting against the Marcomanni?"

Lydia cast a trembling look at Felicitas, who whispered to her in her Greek language; "Do not be alarmed, my dear child, the man is a Christian, we can give him a trifle, and he will be contented." "No, no!" replied the inquirer smilingly, "I am an overseer in the baths of Timotheus, and am an invalid, but through the benevolence of the Emperor and some good people, I manage to live. My arm was wounded by the arrow of a marksman, so that I was useless for warlike service. How gladly would I engage myself again in such a cause, face to face with those rebellious people of the Danube!"

"Perhaps you knew the son of Metella?" inquired Lydia hastily, for the thought struck her, that the man could probably tell her something of Lucius.

"Of course I did!" replied the invalid, "Of course I knew Lucius, and on that account I have come here to-day. Alas! alas! he died too soon."

Felicitas thought that the visit of the poor invalid, was only for the purpose of obtaining a small gift, on the plea of his having known Lucius, and as the moments were precious to her, she sought to put an end to the interview by saying: "Now good man, you are very poor, and perhaps you would like a small gift from Metella's enfranchised."

"By no means," answered he, "If I am poor, I am contented, and I comfort myself with the thought, that the Redeemer of the world Himself belonged to the poor, as long as He was on earth."

"You are a Christian?" said Lydia.

"O yes! and one of those who fought in the Legio Fulminatrix, and therefore I have the privilege to confess my faith everywhere without fear."

"You have perhaps spoken to Lucius?"

"No doubt of it, we belonged to the same Legion, and were under one commander. The son of Metella, equally enthusiastic in virtue as in the honor of war, will ever be remembered by us all. Oh, I see him still! How, after a battle was won, he rode his foaming charger over the ice-clad field of action, and so courageously, that his heart beat strong enough to burst the buckles of his coat of mail. Then flew an arrow from the secret ambush that struck his charger, and a second brought down the rider. We hastened to his assistance. We had a Christian commander, named Cornelius, he was alas, also left behind. This commander loved Lucius with an enthusiastic affection, and met him often during the Winter quarters, that he might explain the truths of Christianity to him.

"Oh! he was a rare youth. How often he gave us the commission, that if he were once wounded, to carry him off to the

field and baptize him! For at first he was afraid to receive baptism as he did not consider himself sufficiently instructed."

Lydia's attention was riveted, and she sent a secret sigh to Heaven as if she would now, as she had often done before, pray for Lucius' baptism.

"Continue," said she, "you speak like a messenger from Heaven."

Oh! his life was too short! the arrow did its work quicker than we had expected. We drew it out, washed the wound, which began to bleed, and the youth then awoke as if from a sleep. He signed to us with half closed eyes, and exerted himself to utter a few words. I did not understand him, and had through downright anxiety, forgotten his last wish.

At length one of my comrades understood him, and said hurriedly, 'he asks you to baptize him!' Oh, had you but seen the seraphic smile that played upon his dying face, when he found his words were understood! We then struck his spear deep into the earth, and raised him against it on his shield in a reclining position. No vessel being at hand, I took off my helmet, and his eye anxiously watched my every step, as I went in search of water. I returned quickly and knelt by his side, the dying youth summoned up all his sinking strength for one great effort; he spoke distinctly: 'I believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God—O baptize me in His name!' With heavy sobs I poured the contents of my helmet upon his head, and baptized him, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. He smiled, bent his head in thanksgiving, and placed his hand in mine, he then fell into his agony, and seemed by the movement of his lips to be in fervent prayer. He opened his dying eyes once more, and motioned that he had something still to say. One of my comrades placed his ear to Lucius' lips and heard with difficulty: "Love to my dear mother, and say I died a Christian." These were his last words; he then closed his eyes and expired.

"As I heard the other day, that an emancipated Christian slave was here from Athens, I sought you out, to beg that you would deliver the last message of a good son to his mother." The poor invalid felt deeply affected the remembrance of his fellow combatant, whom he had accompanied to the threshold of Heaven, and was then obliged to bid a long farewell, grieved him intensely.

"Merciful God!" ejaculated Lydia, "how? Metella's son one of the faithful?—Lucius died a Christian?—Baptized on the field of battle?" Her bright eyes sparkled and filled with tears.

"Yes, yes, tell his mother that she had a good and brave son, who was the darling of the whole Legion, and tell her also that this son died a disciple of Christ."

Lydia informed the invalid, that Metella had also become a Christian, and that perhaps he, who was so tenderly loved by her, had petitioned for her. "So are the ways of Him," continued she, "who carries the destiny of the world and all His creatures in His hands." The brave soldier was taking leave, and wishing the traveler a favorable journey, when Lydia considered that in the name of her good mistress she was bound to reward the bearer of such joyful tidings. She had scarcely entertained the thought a moment, when she opened the golden locket that she had suspended from her neck, and took out of it the large and valuable pearl, a present of Metella's, and offered it to the invalid in the name of her mistress. He refused to accept a reward for a service done to a dying comrade, but as Lydia had assured him that Metella would send him a reward from Athens, if he did not accept the present she offered, he then received the generous gift.

At such unexpected and joyful news, Lydia was stunned, and was obliged, as soon as the stranger had departed, to reflect a little and convince herself, if what she had just heard were a dream or a reality. Already she placed before her eyes, the happiness this news would afford her mistress, and if her departure had not been fixed for that day, she would have had to summon all the strength of her will, to conquer the desire with which she longed for Athens. She hastened with Felicitas to the harbor of Tiberius. The late intelligence made her separation an

easy one. Both promised never to loosen the firm band of mutual love, and wished each other, if they were never to meet again on earth, a happy meeting in "the better Land."

And now, farewell, thou precious Rome! Ever memorable to those who have tarried within thy walls, and offered up their prayers at the tombs of thy Saints!

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE RETURN.

THERE was in the time of the ancient Greeks, a much approved of and peculiar sort of ship, of remarkable height and bulk, to which they gave the name of *Kerkyra*; from the island of *Korcyra* where they were originally built. Such a trading vessel, bearing the name of *Centaurus*, was just launched in the harbor of *Ostia*, and was the one which Lydia had decided on, for her return to Greece. Rich Romans came along side in their gilded barges to visit this triple-oared galley.

At the call of the *Hortators* the rowers take their seats and beat time with their oars to the flute-players on deck.

To judge by the dress and appearance, there were many Asiatics among the travelers. Some were returning from Gaul, in consequence of the persecutions there, to their homes in the East. They had not words to express the manner in which the *Proconsul* of that province consented to the most abominable requests of the people, and this, principally to ingratiate himself with them.

Some of them carried the traces of martyrdom on their bodies, like so many seals of their faith, and as if the days in Lyons had given them no previous warning, they continued in the practice of their religion, regardless of the judgment of the heathens.

Irenæus and *Hegesippus*, both of whom were journeying to *Smyrna*, were, so to say, the spiritual pillars around which the faithful heroes crowded.

The learned *Hegesippus* is not unknown in the legends of the Saints, although his works are not extant. He was a Jew by birth, and became afterwards a member of the Church in Jerusalem. He had traveled much, and had acquainted himself thoroughly with the most remarkable events of Church history: and completed, in the year 133, a history of the Church in five volumes. He resided in Rome till the year 177, therefore to that year in which the persecution took place at Lyons.

Amongst the above-named Asiatics, who were returning from Gaul, one claims our particular attention. He sits motionless the entire day, with a fixed gaze on the blue waters. Now and then he raises his head and sighs deeply. His strained arms, and the scorched flesh on one side of his face, clearly showed that he had suffered the torture. While all were cheerful, and even gay at meals, this gloomy individual, dressed in a thin over-all garment, sat eating a hard biscuit, that he dipped occasionally in a cup of wine. He touched no other food the entire day. Lydia studied this man for some time, and then took courage to address him. He looked at her frowningly, listened to her question, then turned himself towards the sea, and gave no answer. How delighted she would have been to help him, but he kept a sullen distance. Some days after, she made a second attempt, asked him where he came from, and who he was. He answered with a measured voice: "I am an unhappy Christian, leave me in peace!"

He was a Christian, and in the last persecution in Gaul, he denied his Faith, amidst the pains of the rack, and as he was threatened with still greater torments if he refused to reveal the secret crimes of the Christians, he, against his conscience, uttered scandalous lies of crimes which he said they had committed in their secret meetings. At this acknowledgment he was liberated, he took to flight, and waited for an opportunity to leave the province forever, and return to Asia. The heathens who were in the ship, said his name was *Melissos*; they knew his history, and some of them had seen him sacrificing to the gods. Notwithstanding, they despised his character and refused to associate

with him. Of course the Christians had a still poorer opinion of him, so that the unfortunate man was proscribed on all sides. Lydia felt the deepest commiseration for the apostate. As she discovered the cause of his melancholy, she addressed herself to Hægesippus, who usually sat on the stern of the vessel, writing down the thoughts that occurred to him during the voyage. She informed him of the sad state of Melissos, and begged his sympathy. He sought to address him, spoke words of comfort to him, and reminded him, that even the prince of the Apostles three times denied his Master. But also that this denial Peter made good, by his redoubled zeal for Christ, and by his acknowledgment to his Lord, after His resurrection, in the presence of the Apostles three times, to love Him more than the rest.*

Melissos replied in a hollow voice: "I hope to be freed from the wicked spirits, by a baptism in the sea," and in a sullen manner turned from the historian.

There was a Christian youth on board, who unmindful of the heathens present, went through his religious duties without fear. He was liked by all, not only on account of his wit but also for his enchanting voice, with which he knew how to amuse every one during the long voyage. He seemed to make a sad impression on Melissos, and to awaken in him many remembrances of the past. One morning the youth sat in the scuttle and began to sing the following, whilst the sun was rising:

Night flees apace: lo! now the ruddy dawn,
With rising sun, breaks sparkling into morn.
O'er the blue sea shrill winds are whistling wild,
Whilst in the trim bark sails a lonely child.

Cheerful the boy plies well the ready oar;
"I'll turn my helm for port on yonder shore,
Where golden spring glows warm, and gladsome May
Blooms without cease, and decks the glitt'ring bay."

"But see! what nymph starts up, and from the rocks,
Trips on the wave, and shakes her fragrant locks?
Enchanting songs my soul with joy so move
That my young heart well nigh will break with love."

The heedless boy, though love and music mock,
Salutes the sprite, and scudding for the rock
Spreads all his sails, and steers with eager hand,—
Then joyous sets his foot on Siren-land.

Whilst hush'd he bends to hear the warbling strain,
The deadly spell steals o'er his soul amain,
Holds him with charms bound fast to magic land,
And chains with joys unblest, his nerveless hand.

Rousing at last, and trembling with affright,
He sees his doom, and takes to rapid flight,
Seeks for his little bark, but seeks in vain:
The bark is gone, its planks bestrew the main!

The hapless boy sinks sobbing to a seat,
Beneath the rocks where foaming billows beat,
Casts o'er the sea his eyes, and wails uncheck'd,
And breaks his heart, as first his bark was wreck'd.

Watch then, O lonesome youth! and guard with care,
Lest to the Siren's song thou lend an ear,
And dire enchantments lure and love's pretence
Thy fragile bark to wreck—thine Innocence.†

The effect of this song on Melissos was remarkable and observed by all. Night came on, and each one had retired to rest, save the helmsman and the Hortator, who stood on his elevation. A dark figure crept along the deck till it reached the end of the vessel, and began to talk aloud: "O Thou never-sleeping Protector of the universe, lend me thine ear! Thou listenest to the chirping cricket and providest for it, and even the powerless butterfly, that flutters from flower to flower, is an object of thy tender care. Thou beholdest me also.—I am the butterfly, that should have ascended to yonder Paradise of delights, but whose wings have been burnt off under dreadful torture, now I am but a worm—a miserable worm! I have lost faith and hope, the wings of my soul! Bereft of these, I now crawl, a pitiful worm, on the earth. Man mocks me, and Thy Divinity will crush me.

Eternal God dost Thou still know me? I am an object of Thy hatred and all Heaven must detest me! For whose love did I offer incense on the altars of the gods, in whom I have no faith? On whom did I think, and who held me back in the moment that I should have gained the crown? She who is now wandering on the Asiatic shores, sleeplessly and anxiously watching for the sails that are to bring to her him she has so longed for! She is the Siren that took my heart and senses captive, and wrecked my bark when steering for the land of the Saints! She is the slender Roe that gnaws at the stem of my faith, and bites off the bark. O! that death had pursued her, before she had annihilated my virtue! And when I do arrive, she will no longer love, but curse the cripple and the Atheist!"

"O, seal O, seal thy cool embrace, thy melodious song! Thy liberating baptism! Dissolve this immortal being called soul, and spread it over thy immeasurable waters. In foaming billows will I then beat on the Asiatic shores, kiss her feet, and cool her longing. Dissolve this immortal being, that it may rise on high over thy surface as a mist, and as storm-whipped clouds in myriads of drops, fall upon the locks and robes of my complaining Syriax!" And then he bent himself forward lower and lower, and vanished in an instant.

The Hortator near the ship's lamp, was looking at the apostate and said to the young Christian who had not yet retired: "Listen to the Phrygian fool! He is declaiming a monologue."

"I did not observe him," replied the youth, and both looked inquiringly towards the front rail, where he had been standing.

They lost sight of the stranger in the darkness of the night, but on the waters they heard a gentle splashing, which ceased by degrees.

"Help! help!" cried out a clear voice from the deck, "Melissos has thrown himself into the sea," and almost in the same moment, the supple youth sprang into the rowboat, loosened it from the ship, and made towards the drowning man. By ropes thrown to the youth from above, Melissos was drawn up just as he was on the point of sinking. He lay in the bottom of the boat, without showing the slightest sign of life. His pale features half shrouded in his dripping hair, clearly portrayed the agony of mind that drove him to the deed. The occurrence caused great confusion. They looked upon the drowned man as a madman, and complained of the imprudence of allowing him his liberty among the passengers. Others expressed the suspicion that the Christians, who did not seem to think much about him, had purposely sacrificed him.

In the mean time, they left him lying there, and returned again to rest. The deck cleared, and all restored to quiet, Lydia came forward from the stern of the vessel, with uplifted hands; she cast a sorrowful look around her, and wept and prayed. "O if I had but followed the dictates of my heart! Had I but sacrificed the least respect to the greater, you would not now lie a victim here to our insensibility! Alas, why did we not save thee! Almighty Father if still a spark of life be in him, fan it, and give him back to Thy flock! It becomes Thee as the all Holy One to judge the sinner, but it becomes us to look upon him as our brother, and to love him."

The moon rose clear, and the waves, as if naught had happened, danced fondly in her beams. Flying fish rose from the dark waters, saluted the splashing boat, and the sails of the vessel, then fluttered a little higher, and sank again to their watery home.

An anxious feeling agitated the heart of Lydia. Nature looked so peaceful, the body so pale, and the deed so dreadful. Overwhelmed with anguish, she sank upon her cushion, and throwing a veil over her face she began to reflect on the fate of Melissos. Suddenly a ray of hope darted through her frame, mild as the morning beam that kisses off the dew from the flower. She rose and approached the body, which appeared to her as if its posture had changed. "Good Father," she exclaims, "he raises himself, he sinks his head upon his arm! Melissos, you return again to life!" "Yes," replied he, after a pause, and looking round,— "and again to hope."—"No, all is not yet lost, I feel it

* St John xxi. 17.

† The translator is indebted to the Rev. R. Palmer, O. S. D. for putting the above into proper metre.

here"—placing his hand upon his breast—"Regenerated," then said Lydia, "return back to expiate the injustice done."

Melissos recovered, his despair was conquered by the language of sympathy, and the care bestowed upon him daily by the passengers. His lost peace returned and he sailed towards his Asiatic home another man, and with the resolution, there to be received again into the Communion of Saints.

Two months passed, and the longed-for land was still at a distance. A cabin boy sits above on the mast, and scans the broad sea in the direction of Achaia. He looked long in vain, but at length his clear silver voice called down from his rocking ship-cradle: "The mountains of Greece are visible!" all hastened to the fore-castle, to convince themselves that the shores were near. In the greatest haste the announcer descended from the mast, to claim reward for his joyful tidings. Although land was distant, the pilot looked around him unconcerned, for he had now another sea-mark by which to guide his ship; as long as he was on the high seas, he had nothing but the stars, he now had the mountains, and he steered courageously by them towards Syros, where some of the passengers disembarked.

Melissos was of the number, who, on taking a respectful leave of Lydia, with tears, expressed his gratitude for her sympathy, and made a firm promise, with God's assistance, to be again of the "One fold." Those who were journeying to the East, went by another vessel, and those destined for Attica continued the voyage in the Centaurus. It was a soft pleasant morning, such as we never see in our foggy North when the ship arrived at Piræus. The sun was still slumbering in the East, and the Hymettus on the other side of Athens, resembled a grey veil, behind which the rising sun was still concealed. At last, Aurora waking, drew aside "the curtain of the morn." The king of day scatters his golden gifts over mountain, sea and plain, and sheds a new life upon the earth.

How majestically the Centaurus neared the shore! The morning breeze swelling every sail. The last commands given to the weary crew, were in a tone that said: "fellow laborers, our work is done!" Lydia was almost the first to touch the land, and greet the ruins of the once great arsenal, and the walls of Cyclops, destroyed by Sulla, which united Piræus with Athens; and now she pictured to herself in the liveliest colors, the meeting that was just at hand.

One of Metella's servants was to be seen for some days on the heights of the Acropolis, looking anxiously towards the harbor. At length the mast of a vessel appeared above the horizon, and by degrees, showed itself in full sail, steering towards the coast. When it approached near enough, he recognized in the flags and pennants the expected ship. Duranus hurried down breathless, to announce the tidings to his mistress. Metella answered with a cry of delight, and hastened to the threshold of the inner gate of the palace, where she waited impatiently, the arrival of her much loved child. Ophne was sent immediately to the harbor, and Lydia had scarcely landed, when she found herself in the embraces of her affectionate friend, who overwhelmed her with questions, which she herself answered, and imparted a volume of news relative to the changes that had occurred in her absence, and ended by declaring that there was *one* secret, she was most impatient to tell her, but she dared not, and so she went on, talking unceasingly till they reached the palace.

Feeling has a language in all places, and through all ages, and this language expresses itself in the acts of that ardent tenderness, wherewith one heart unites itself to another. When Metella and Lydia met, they lost all power of utterance, Metella stretched out her arms and her newly found child sunk nearly senseless into her embrace. After a few moments, both retired to the oratory to pour forth their gratitude to God. Having spent some time in prayer, Metella motioned Lydia to follow her into one of her private apartments. "How have I not sighed for this day that would bring thee back to Athens! The silent valleys, the solitary groves, the purling streams, yes, all the stars in the blue vault of Heaven, can witness my longing for thee! The letters, dear child, that you sent me from Rome, were a weak indemnity for your own dear self, and still they were so

precious to me, that I had them ever near me. What an interest I have taken in all you have gone through since we parted! and how did I grieve at the news, that you could not find your mother!"

A look gave Metella to understand with what resignation and peace of soul the daughter had borne the loss of her parent. "My child," continued she, "as happy as is the return home so much those you have left behind, feel your loss." "I have no one now on this earth to whom I belong," said Lydia, "but I have still a mistress, who, I am certain for the future, will accept my service, and who will never abandon me."

Metella embraced Lydia tenderly: "not mistress, not lady, not friend, there is another name that stands higher than all these—that which of all the names on earth sounds sweetest, and by this sweet name you shall ever call me—The name of Mother!"

"What I offer thee now is not a thing of momentary affection; ever since I lost my son, I have thought of how I could hear again the sweet name of mother—I have chosen you that you may be to me a daughter, a tenderly beloved daughter, presented to me by God Himself. I have always called thee Lydia, but you received another name, far more beautiful in baptism. Therefore take back thy name Seraphical! yes, my only daughter must be Seraphical! All that belongs to me in future belongs to thee, and as thou hast a daughter's possession of my heart so shalt thou have the possession of all the temporal trifles that I call my own. Long did the court of Athens hesitate to acknowledge you as my heiress, because you had been a slave, but I proved that you were free-born, and never purchased in public places, that you came to my house a fugitive, and found shelter there, and that without having any right, the master of the Smyrnian vessel, on which you sought your passage to Greece, took you as captive, and sent you to my house. All is now arranged, and you are acknowledged as my adopted child, and heir to all I possess. O may you be for the inhabitants of Athens, what I should like to have been for them, and you'll be a pattern of a benevolent Christian, and when death draws near, you will look upon the poor of our city as your children."

The deeply affected Lydia composed herself, and without being asked, pressed a kiss on Metella's cheek for the first time. "My faith," said she, "left me once an orphan, and the same faith has again given me a mother. I shall never forget that it was thy boundless love that liberated the slave, and from an enfranchised, raised her to be thy child. And now I can no longer suppress the joy that fills my overflowing heart. I have now to tell you the particulars of the happy death of your son. Lucius! this is not the first day, that you have been a mother to a Christian child."

Metella did not understand what the words signified, "You had a Christian child, before you yourself thought of being one. Yes, your son reposed in the bosom of his Redeemer before the dawn of faith enlightened his mother's heart."

O, remember the vision! Thy Lucius slumbered at the feet of his Redeemer."

"My son? I suspect!"—

"Your suspicions are happy truths. I myself spoke to the veteran in Rome who baptized him. His last words were: 'I believe in Jesus Christ the Son of God—O baptize me in His name;' and before he expired; 'Love to my dear mother, and say that her son Lucius died a Christian.'"

Metella was astounded, and a holy awe ran through her whole frame. She rose hastily and speechless, seized Seraphica's hand, and hastened with her to the oratory. He alone who searches the depths of the heart, knows what she felt when pouring forth to Him the effusions of a grateful soul.

What a double joy for Metella! God had already commenced to bestow upon her "The hundred fold in this life." She had now one child an advocate in Heaven, and another a sweet solace to her on earth. Her life was beginning to her anew, but O, how changed! The pleasures of Chrysophora were very different from those of the Christian Metella. In former years self was her first consideration, now it was her last—so wonderfully did Faith transform this noble soul, that she was scarcely

to be recognized. The haughty and imperious bearing was changed to a mild and modest dignity. The fiery Metella of former days, is no longer heard to speak to the meanest of her household in aught but gentle and consoling words. She spends her days with her adopted child, doing good to all, dispensing the temporal blessings which God has bestowed upon her, like the faithful steward of a liberal Master.

Lydia was delighted beyond measure when Metella told her that Ophne had become a Christian, and that Duranus was then a Catechumen; she knew immediately that this was Ophne's secret. The joy of all the domestics on the return of Lydia, knew no bounds, particularly poor little Thrax, to whom she had always been most kind.

Metella and Lydia spent their days alternately between Elis, Athens and Eleusis, in each of which places they had the happiness of seeing a little colony of Christians rising up around them. Lydia took upon her the laborious portion of their charitable labors, and the sick and needy were the objects of her most anxious solicitude.

The poor potter was no longer poor he had been removed with his now dying child, to one of Metella's out-dwellings, appropriated to the male portion of her domestics. In Lydia's daily visit to his little son, who gradually declined after the operation already mentioned, poor Hyllos learned to believe, from the conversations she had with Askanus, who loved Lydia dearly, and who always entreated her to tell him something of her God, that Jupiter and Minerva were no gods, and therefore unable to help him. And when Askanus became thoroughly instructed in the duties of a Christian, and begged to be of the same religion with his benefactress, his father added an earnest petition that he might also have the same happiness. "Yes Hyllos," said Lydia, "I shall be delighted to see you one of the true fold, but you have yet to be instructed."

"Dear Lady, have I not been present each day that you talked so beautifully to my son? Old Hyllos has still a good memory—I don't forget a word of all you've said." To Lydia's astonishment, on questioning him, she found him thoroughly prepared to receive baptism, and promised that his name should be added to that of Askanus, for the Bishop's approval.

After having ministered to the temporal comforts of her poor invalid, she left their little dwelling, and in crossing the courtyard, on her way to the palace, she heard loud sobbing behind one of the pillars, and wondered to see little Thrax bathed in tears. "What has happened, Thrax?" Poor Thrax could give no other answer than "I'm only a dwarf! I'm only a dwarf!" "A caged dwarf, Thrax, not one by nature." "O but I was bought only to be laughed at!" "No; Thrax! you were sold to be laughed at, but purchased by a feeling mistress, to be treated with every kindness. Your dear young master, Lucius, was always your best friend."

"O, there it is! there it is! I want to see him again, but I can't, I can't, I'm only a dwarf! Askanus told me the other day, that if he were good, he would soon be where my young master is, and that is where I want to go, but I am only a dwarf, I'm only a dwarf!" continued he wringing his hands.

Lydia could scarcely conceal her emotion at the faithful and affectionate remembrance of the departed, and found great difficulty in persuading Thrax, that his diminutive body was no obstacle, to his being one day united to his deceased master. His countenance began to brighten up at this assurance, and he asked if he tried to be as good as Askanus, to whom he had become greatly attached, might he not soon know all about the happy place of which they were always talking?

Lydia told him that he could come with her every day to visit Askanus, and receive instructions, but that the God of the Christians was to be loved for Himself, and not for any other consideration.

We will now leave Thrax on his way to Christianity, and reflect on how faithfully Seraphica fulfilled the duties for which she had so ardently petitioned when in the dungeon at Smyrna. "Mother, I shall not die yet, I have besought our Lord not yet to call me to my eternal home; I wish to suffer, not to die:

I burn with the desire of showing to the world, in the mirror of a pure life, the devotion to our Redeemer, and to relate to unbelievers what the Son of God has done for man. Not till I have fulfilled that mission, shall I be called hence. It may be long till then! God has heard my prayer—my Guardian Angel has revealed it to me!"

CHAPTER XXV.

THE CONCLUSION.

Nosse peræta juvat, sed præstat tradita posse.

It is beautiful to know what is noble, but still more beautiful to practise it. Thus we see in a slave, weak in sex, in age, and above all, in her state of life, to what an elevation grace can raise the heart. God has chosen the weak ones of the world to confound the strong.* Suppose Lydia had not been rewarded for this triumph of virtue by any temporal gains, by honors or dignities what consequence?

Earthly splendor, and exterior recognitions are a mere accidental gift of the interior moral greatness, which could neither be raised nor lessened by her.

Notwithstanding, it thus generally happens that honor likes to attach itself to virtue, and follows it, as though it were her shadow.

This much-trying girl could tell what wisdom lies in affliction. She would never have reached that degree of virtue, had she not passed through the fiery ordeal of suffering. If virtue is to appear in its beauty, she must for a time suffer oppression. The martyrs of our holy Church would never have died so resigned and joyful, if unutterable sorrows had not led them through the dark labyrinths of their lives to the open gates of justice—for them the gates of triumph.

Witness Polycarp, Justin, Blandina, Pothinus of Lyons and a multitude of others. It is, in fact, the truly gifted souls whom God visits, purifies and perfects. This very truth Seneca so beautifully explained by the words: "Miserable he, who was never miserable. There is not an anguish, if we begin with the blighted hopes of youthful loving heart, down to that of treachery, torture and the laceration of a despairing mind, which will not there find a complete expression. Every injustice is an admonishing voice in this valley of tears, and the oftener it returns, the more we long for our departure, which, correctly speaking, is our way home. But a friendship with death is the greatest triumph of the human mind over the terror of nature. How magnificent is the sun surrounded by stormy clouds when sinking to the West! But while one hemisphere admires his departing beauty, another, at the same moment is cheered by his rising splendor thus sinking and rising are one of the same. With man it is even so; his departure from this world is a hymn of joy to Heaven and a kiss to death, which eternity gives to the approaching soul, as the seal of an indissoluble espousal. Through the life of our slave, a warm zeal animated her for the salvation of souls. She had the lamp of faith lighted up in the sun of revelation, and carried it as well in her humble dwelling as in the palace of the wealthy. The love by which it was animated, conquered all obstacles. "I passed by thee, and saw thee," said the prophet, "and behold thy time was the time of lovers."† She wandered on the thorny way imprinted with the footsteps of the Lord, and when she saw a loiterer, either to the right or to the left, she called to him: "Thou slow of heart, why delayest thou, come without fear, without hesitation, be not timid in treading on thorns, which fell from the crown of your King." Such are souls as God wills them, not those who loiter about inactive counting the grains of sand. O how is, also in our days, the number of the afflicted so large and our love so small! "Ye shall be fishers of men," said the Lord to His disciples and He Himself went out before them as a divine model. For he once in the fulness of time looked down from the highest Heavens on

* 1 Cor. i. 27. † Oz. xvi. 8.

the dark ocean of the universe, where myriads of worlds were in motion. Looking also on our planet, whose inhabitants were sighing after light and truth, He lowered His doctrine in the net of mercy, and drew us all to Him. His disciples followed His example. The Prince of the Apostles, while hanging on the cross, admonished his third successor, Cletus: "Never forget to preserve your own soul, in saving the souls of your brethren." The same duty is also laid on the conscience of each one of us. "Salvando Salvabimur."

While we describe the bitter trials of a single unbloody martyr in that century of affliction, another picture of incomparably greater martyrdom presents itself to our eyes. The bride of Jesus Christ—the holy Church. Was not the Church herself that slave, who already in her earliest youth carried the chains of slavery? Unsheltered, this orphan wandered about, after her paternal home, Jerusalem, was laid desolate, of which Smyrna's destruction was a mere painting. As a fugitive maiden this same bride journeyed across the Mediterranean Sea, and entered into the service of an imperious, sensual, and crowned mistress, rolling in superfluous prosperity: and the name of this mistress is Rome. She served there nearly three hundred years, during constant ill-treatment, mockery, and persecution and tortures even to the heart's blood. Who imagined then, that from this obscurity and after such contempt, so powerful a life, so rich in influence would unfold itself? Then came the time in which this proud mistress submitted to be taught by the low and persecuted maiden, a time in which princes abjured their tyranny and absolute will, and shared with the slave the possessions of the world, and both named themselves: Christian Empire, and Christian Church. This remarkable day, the most important since the day of our Redemption, was the 29th of October, in the year 312. "It appears to be almost a general law," said an observer of the people, "that the prosperity or success of things is connected with a certain obscurity." What a coming forth, after three hundred years of secrecy and silence! That effect was not accomplished by physical strength, not by the sword, but by a power called Christian charity. For this charity is of all powers the greatest on earth, and what she fails to conquer, is unconquerable.

It was a conflict to be, or not to be, which was kept on from Nero's time to that of Constantine. After the conquest, the last of which was gained over Maxentius on the Tiber, he passed in triumph through the streets of Rome and, with him brought the Faith victorious to the "Eternal City."

A lance-bearer walked before the chariot of the conqueror, holding on high the bleeding head of the conquered—it was the head of fallen heathenism. "Not captive strangers," remarks a writer of that time, "swell the triumph, but armies of vices which had hitherto filled the city conquered crimes, perfidy, haughtiness, cruelty, pride, scorn, voluptuousness and unlawful desires, all these were bound in iron chains. But still more remarkable and less known than one would imagine, is the edict which Constantine and his partner in power, Licinius, appointed to be proclaimed in Nicomedia."

"As we have known long since," said the Emperors. "that freedom in religion is not to be denied, and that the practice of which, is left to the will and views of each one, so should we have sooner commanded that like all others, the Christians should be free to hold their religious views."

"But as this permission has been granted on many and various conditions, so it has perhaps happened that by a constrained practice of their religion, many have been repulsed. As we therefore, I, the Emperor Constantine, and I, the Emperor Licinius arrived happily together in Milan, and as we took into consideration all that concerned the security of the public welfare, we believed ourselves obliged before all things else, first to arrange what concerned the worship of the Divinity, so that we gave to the Christians the same freedom as to all others, to follow that religion, which they considered best suited to their views and happiness. In order that whoever is the Divinity in Heaven, that He may be gracious to us, and to all our subjects. All former proclamations contrary to this, are to be null and void.

For it is clear and compatible with the peace of our time, that each one should have the choice to worship whatever divinity he will, and that hereby no sort of religious worship is to be excluded.

"In addition to this, whatever concerns the Christians in particular, we have found it good to determine, that their former houses of assembly, and the estates they formerly possessed, which, according to certain edicts, fell into the hands of the law or otherwise, shall be returned gratuitously: and if the present possessors ask for compensation, they must apply for it to the imperial governor."

Strangers admire to the present day, the ruins of the triumphal arch which the Senate erected to the "Liberator of the city:" and who can behold Constantine's arch without being moved at the remembrance of that day!

But now there shall be a new contemplation of things, a lasting reconciliation made between religion and temporal power. The arm of the Church henceforward shall be free, equal to that of the State; both arms shall have one and the same pulsation, the spirit of the Redeemer. The two highest institutions of the earth, a Christian Church, and a Christian State: these two arms belong to one and the same body, Jesus Christ. For the Messiah Himself will rule the world for the future with one hand through the Church, in distributing the gifts of the spirit, with the other through the State, caring for the temporal interests of the people. So will He, as Master of the world, guide His children to the home where He has prepared mansions for them. The period of that torturing conflict, in which Church and State seemed to bleed to death, was symbolically expressed in the figure of the Crucified One. His two hands intended to bestow blessings, were pierced, and the blood flowed down from the cross for three hours, He who wished to embrace all lovingly was crucified. The Church too, which was intended to raise man, and lead him towards his high destination, was galled by the State for a period of three hundred years.

After the Resurrection, our Lord appeared to His disciples, raised His hands, showed them His wounds and said *Pax Vobis*: and after the Church and State had celebrated their long-hoped-for resurrection, they had also no words more beautiful to proclaim to the world, than the same peaceful salutation: "*Pax Vobis*."

Peace to the people, by the right that had its origin in the Divine will, and peace to each individual through religion, which with right took root in one and the same soil—the heart of Jesus.

This new ordination of all religious and civil events was first through the merits of the Son of God; to Him therefore the first thanks are due. But after Him these intrepid combatants claim our next thanks—those who shrank not from any sacrifice to call forth the new state of things. How many tears, how many sighs, and how much blood were necessary to obtain this greatest of all good gifts. What did it not cause to save this precious inheritance from the shipwreck of the states, from the peat-tential breath of heresy, and from the torrents of so many revolutions! This inheritance has passed on to the present century, and we are the possessors of it. Thoughtless is he who has never taken into consideration at what a price it has been purchased, and the deepest contempt falls to his lot, who sullies the treasure of faith with the rancor of mockery. But we have inherited this treasure unscathed, to deliver it over to our descendants. The light of our eyes will be soon extinguished, but when our graves will have disappeared, and our very names will have faded from the memory—yes, when the temples erected, and palaces of our royal cities fall to ruins, then will the later generations still reflect on the champions of the first century, and their hearts will beat stronger at the soul-stirring thought: "We are the descendants of Holy Martyrs!"

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